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MY JAPANESE PRINCE

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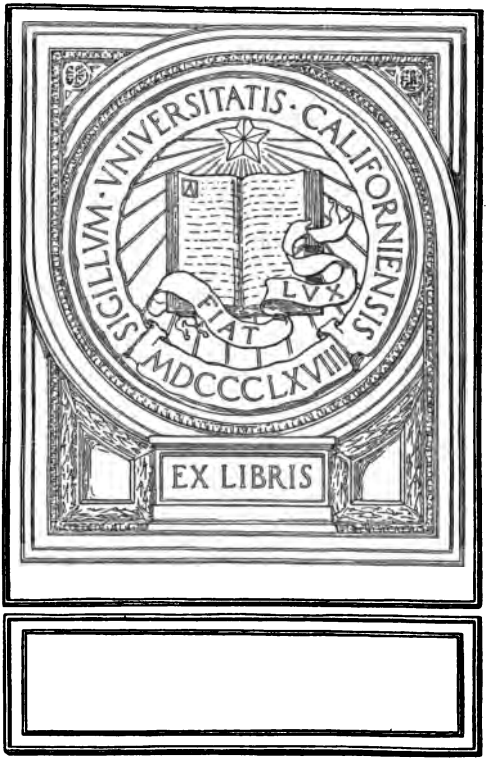

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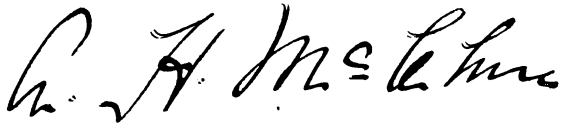

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My Japanese Prince

(Being some startling excerpts from the diary of Hilda Patience Armstrong of Meriden, Connecticut, at present travelling in the Far East)

By

ARCHIBALD CLAVERING GUNTER

AUTHOR OF

"MR. BARNES OF NEW YORK," "MR. POTTER OF TEXAS," ETC.

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MY JAPANESE PRINCE

(Being some extraordinary passages in the Diary of Miss Hilda Armstrong, formerly of Meriden, Connecticut, but at present on a journey to the Far East.)

EPISODE THE FIRST.

THE WATER FETE AT TOKYO.

CHAPTER I.

THE ACTOR OF THE KABUKIZA THEATRE.

THE time was yesterday.

"Come on, Angel," cried Miss Pinkie Caldwell, "the Kabukiza Theatre and a picnic on the river won't do you much harm, even without a chaperone."

"Pooh, I have been at New York theatres, minus that undesirable article," I replied airily. "Father's down at Yokohama and will be busy all day." Then I suggested eagerly: "Who are coming with us?"

"Baron Serge Schevitch of the Russian Legation and Charlie Alston Brown."

"Oh, yes, the Tokyo representative of the great firm of Jabez, Slocum & Walters, of New York, San Francisco, Yokohama, Shanghai and Niuchwang," I

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laughed. "Mr. Brown has told me of his commercial importance a dozen times since I have been in Tokyo." To this I added with American determination: "I'll do it! Only you had better say nothing to papa. He believes in chaperones."

"Funny taste for a Yankee," said Miss Caldwell critically. "Where did he pick that up?"

"In Russia," I replied, "building railways. Dad has lived in Russia so long working on the Trans-Siberian that he is half a Muscovite."

"Well, Madame de Comoron of the French Legation would have come with us but she happens to be indisposed—hot weather and a jealous husband," laughed Miss Pinkie. "Perhaps, who knows, we may see that Japanese officer, the one you told me about, that black-eyed fellow who was on those bridge contracts for his government in Meriden, Connecticut, when you were there."

"Tum, tum, dark eyes are no more interesting to me. I have seen too many of them around here lately," I jeered.

"Well, if you have," said Pinkie inquisitorially, "why are your cheeks as red as lotus flowers now? Are you in love with him?"

"What, in love with a Japanese!" I concealed my embarrassment in a giggle.

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"Don't you know, the Japs are the coming people," remarked Miss Caldwell. "Anyway, this afternoon you will see something of them that will give you new sensations."

This conversation takes place between Miss Pinkie Farnham Caldwell, who is the daughter of an attaché of the American Legation at Tokyo, and myself, Hilda Patience Armstrong, of Meriden, Connecticut, daughter of Peter Milliken Armstrong, head of a great bridge building and railroad constructing firm of the same place, an institution that has large contracts with the Russian Government for the completion of its railways in Manchuria. It is on this business that my father is on his way to Port Arthur now, having me in his charge; and, *en route,* is spending a few days in Tokyo, looking after some contracts he also has with a native firm in connection with a railway in Yezo, also the furnishing of bridges for the Japanese road in Korea. My father knows that the Russians and Japs hate each other, but one's money is as good as the other's—and Dad takes contracts from either of them.

The day is a superb one, and for the season, not warm. We are standing in my rooms in the Imperial Hotel, Tokyo, looking over its beautiful grounds on the city's sunny unsidewalked street and watching the

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crowd of jinrikishas carrying the throng of bare-headed people to the great lotus fete and water picnic given during the mid-summer of 1903 in the Japanese Capital.

Miss Pinkie Caldwell is a dashing American girl of about twenty-two and looks exquisitely pretty in a diaphanous costume made from a French model by a Tokyo milliner. I am in a New York summer gown. In its exquisite gauzes and laces I am not afraid to stand up beside her or anyone else.

Pinkie is the daughter of one of Uncle Sam's Legation attachés, who has been kept in Tokyo through several American administrations on account of his knowledge of things Japanese. Consequently, Miss Caldwell having grown up from extreme youth to young ladyhood amid the cherry blossoms and plum groves of the Tokiado is as nearly Japanese as an American girl can be. She jabbers the language with what to me seems the fluency of a native and knows the customs and etiquette of *Dai Nippon* from a court reception to a country ramble amid green rice fields and Shinto temples. In addition, she can do what we would call in America a little polite "slumming," being quite at home at entertainments at tea-houses on the Shimbashi or by the banks of the Sumida River, where she calls out *"Ha irashi!"* to entering geisha

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girls at these events with what seems to me a true Japanese inflection.

Consequently, under her guidance, my visit to Tokyo has been a very pleasant one, and now, I having remained in the capital two weeks, I am beginning to think myself quite at home in a kuruma drawn by a running coolie, and have no doubt I could tramp around in Japanese clogs if necessary.

"By the bye, you have never told me the name of your Japanese officer," remarks Miss Pinkie contemplatively. "I know a lot of them here"; querying rather eagerly: "Is he Engineers, General Staff or Guard?"

"General Staff, I believe."

"Then your young man is pretty certain to be in Tokyo. But his name?"

"I have forgotten it."

"Fibber! You say he saved you from a runaway automobile."

"He did, with the ability of a track athlete and the technical skill of a racing chauffeur," I answer, "but he didn't give me his card."

"Still, Miss Prevarication, you know his cognomen. Aha, you don't answer! Thinking about him, eh?"

Miss Pinkie's suggestion is unfortunately true. Mentally I am seeing the broad street just in front of

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the Meriden Arms Manufacturing Company, Connecticut, on a hot, dusty summer day nearly a year ago. A maiden arrayed in light muslin costume is crossing the street droopingly, holding a white ribbon-trimmed sunshade over her head to protect her from the conquering heat. Suddenly there is a cry of horror! I glance about wondering whether the shout heralds a mad dog on a rampage or a coming explosion in a neighboring cartridge factory. From under my white sunshade, I see at terrifying speed coming straight at me a touring automobile with no one at its steering wheel, no one blowing a warning toot upon its horn to give me notice to fly for safety.

Panic stricken, I stand like a statue in the path of the coming juggernaut. In a moment I will be added to the year's list of automobile deaths.

Like a flash an athletic figure clothed in white flannels springs from the sidewalk, lands like a ball of rubber in the middle of the street and takes a gymnastic leap into the vehicle. Even before his feet touch the automobile, he seizes the steering wheel and with a sudden decisive twist directs from me the whirling death, just missing me by an inch. Then by deft use of brakes and gear and steering apparatus, he causes the machine to take a wide circle in the broad street and brings it to a dead standstill in front of a

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half fainting maiden, who now the danger being over emits a little frightened scream.

Then a slightly built athletic looking gentleman takes off his hat with military precision and says in the softest voice: "Pardon me, honored lady, I hope you are not disturbed."

I only look at him, a brunette figure of that unmistakable set-up that indicates a professional soldier. His military bearing at first suggests to me West Point, but I have since discovered it arose from his being in the Japanese service. My rescuer has a long drooping moustache, thin but imperious lips and commandingly dark eyes.

"Some very careless idiot, I presume, is the owner of this magnificent piece of mechanism," he continues, adding: "The Americans are a reckless race."

"Yes, this auto belongs, I believe, to young Jimmy Doublesex, who has been educated in Paris and has become half an idiot under absinthe. His father owns the big gun factory," I falter.

Here we are interrupted by a boyish voice from the tonneau, gasping: "Help! Get a move on! Don't you see my legs sticking up? Grab my feet and pull me up over the seat and I'll be O. K."

With one quick powerful jerk, the military gentleman yanks young Doublesex out of the tonneau and

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deposits him in the front seat, where he sits blinking at us, and looking at his broken goggles, remarks apologetically, rubbing the dust out of his eyes: "Yer see, I was just trying my new Panhard, warranted to make sixty miles an hour. Catching the eye of a peach of a factory girl, who was looking out of that third-floor window, I stood up on the seat to give her the wink, lost my balance and, before I knew it, disappeared heels over head in the tonneau in the rear. Do you think I need repairing?"

"Yes, most honored sir, in a lunatic asylum," said my rescuer grimly, and stepped out of the vehicle. Then he turned his attention to me and remarked sympathetically: "You're not frightened, I hope, esteemed young lady?"

"I was till I saw you," I answered naively.

"Well, be very careful of yourself," he remarked pleasantly as he assisted me to the sidewalk. "Someone must value you—very highly, honored young lady." It seemed to me his gaze, which was tender, yet piercing, emphasized his words. With another military salute he left me, and I watched his quick, nervously precise, military step carry him from my view.

From this revery I wake up with a sudden start. Dusty Connecticut Meriden fades away like a photo-

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graphic negative exposed to the sun; bustling, clean-swept Tokyo with the picturesque civilization of the East is about me. I hear Miss Pinkie Caldwell suggesting a proposition that makes me fairly gasp.

"Great Heavens, you don't mean it!" I exclaim.

"Indeed I do! We can both make ourselves brunette enough. Your figure will be perfect in kimono—as for mine—" Pinkie knows she is a sylph.

Before I can dissent to her startling plan, a cheerful "How are you, girls?" announces the entry of unceremonious Charlie Brown.

The gentlemen have arrived.

Baron Serge Schevitch in his soft Slavic tone is saying: "Young ladies, I make my bow," and his Yankee companion is remarking: "I hit it lucky. I've struck a first-class box at the Kabukiza Theatre for two yen a seat and a first-class boat on the river, with two coolies to pole it and one to steer, a cabin for shade, and twenty paper lanterns for illumination purposes, likewise a big icebox all filled with refreshments, liquid and solid, for——"

"Never mind the price, you commercial creature," cries Miss Caldwell. "Come on!" Pinkie puts out a pretty foot, perfectly booted and delicately hosed, anxious to start.

"Besides, we have a carriage which is more sociable

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than the kurumas," suggests the Baron as he escorts me down the stairs to a rather dilapidated looking equipage, which is drawn by two very much undersized horses. We would call them ponies in America.

Baron Serge Schevitch is a clean-featured, six foot, blue pale-eyed, sunny moustachioed, blond, who, I believe, at one time figured in the Chevalier-Guard in St. Petersburg and is now an honorary attaché of the Russian Legation at the Japanese Court. Why he is here I do not know. He is not the military attaché; he is not the naval attaché; just what his mission is, nobody can say.

He has a diplomatic command of his features except when passion dominates them—which is seldom. Though I have noticed that when near me, his habitual control of countenance sometimes gives way to an ardor it seems difficult for him to repress.

I hope no one will think me conceited, but sometimes in these memoirs it is necessary for me to state facts that come under my observation. If a man is in love with me, I shall state it, though I may blush to the ears as I put it on paper.

Charlie Brown is a sandy moustached edition of Brother Jonathan, presenting obtrusively in his manner and diction the least attractive and commercial side of the Yankee nation. His ideas condensed are

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briefly: "Money, *money,* MONEY! girls, *girls,* GIRLS!" his adoration of the almighty dollar somewhat exceeding his love of the fair sex; though judging by my own instincts, he must have been much more fortunate in obtaining the former than the latter. He has been very successful in Shanghai as the managing man of the great American firm he now represents in Tokyo, though he foolishly thinks that Chinese customs and ideas can be transferred and will fit in Tokyo, something in which I, even with my little Eastern experience, imagine he will some day find he is mistaken.

Baron Schevitch, the Muscovite, though a man of the world, is a thorough gentleman, at least as regards his bearing towards me. I have met him only a few times, but I am pleased to find that I fall rather to his escort than to that of my own countryman, who seems to be entirely devoted to Miss Pinkie's bright brown eyes that have a most attractive lustre, and her rather vivacious beauty which has a tinge of Oriental witchery.

These reflections are jounced about in me as we rattle over the muddy unpaved Ginza, or main street, pausing only when our runner, a half nude coolie who prances ahead of our carriage, signals us to stop at corners in order that he can clear a track for us in the

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crowd. For the streets are full of people bound for the Sumida Gawa, upon which will take place the annual picnic that during lotus time is tendered to that river and it deity.

As we drive along, the polite crowd gets out of our way and gazes at us with an unaffectedly frank curiosity, our coachman exchanging elaborate bows with passing confreres and kurumas; a carriage is by no means common in the Tokyo streets. In addition, Pinkie's vivacious gestures and excited native exclamations cause the onlookers to pause in their holiday consumption of watermelon sliced by numerous vendors, and *kori,* a kind of planed ice flavored with fruit syrups, somewhat similar to what are called snowballs in New York confectionery establishments.

But making our way through these, I soon forgot everything but the extraordinary sensations that came to me at the Kabukiza.

The performance was half over. Dramatic affairs quite often commence very early in the morning in Japan and last all day. Though the Tokyo theatres are usually closed in mid-summer, this was an extra performance, given probably on account of the number of visitors that the lotus festival had attracted to the Japanese capital. At all events, hot as it was, the theatre was crowded.

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Having our tickets secured, we were not delayed at the entrance nor compelled to go to some neighboring tea house for cards of admission. Fortunately also we chanced to arrive between acts, as it is not in this polite country customary to disturb the audience by entering or going out during anything but intermissions. Mr. Brown had taken for our accommodation one of those square compartments something like church pews that the Japs call boxes. It is in the fashionable part of the house and between the *hana-michi* and the galleries.

With a suppressed giggle Miss Pinkie getting on her knees as if a native girl, directs me to assume the usual squatting position on some soft cushions. I do so and gaze about. The two big balconies and the whole pit are occupied by an unusually brilliant audience drawn by a great performance; for the most celebrated actor of his day, Kikiguro, the worthy successor to the late Ichikawa Danjuro, the Salvini of Japan, is in the bill.

Of this wonderful artist's performance, which moved me both to tears and to laughter, his facial expression being so remarkable that I could follow accurately his emotions during each scene, I have little to say; likewise of the curious revolving stage, graceful scenery and brilliant lighting as well as the ac-

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curately gorgeous costumes of Old Japan displayed in the only place that they can now be viewed, the national theatre.

These greatly interested me for a time; also the processions along the two gangways called the *hana-michi* or flower paths, because from these places the successful actors received the congratulations of the audience. These ran from each side of the stage to the other end of the hall and from there, between acts, male attendants distributed tea and cakes and other refreshments to the audience, some of the spectators taking their lunch unceremoniously on the stage when the curtain was down, almost every man and woman smoking a small silver pipe till a haze of smoke rose up to make the scene misty.

In deference to the river fireworks the performance was to be a short one—a four-act tragedy—and a little comedy—two acts of the first piece were already finished.

Then an entr'acte curtain impressed me exceedingly. The whole drapery was inscribed elaborately in Japanese characters. Gazing upon them, I conceived these must be inscriptions taken from the dramatic poets of ancient *Dai Nippon,* but as I looked I gave a gasp of astonishment. I plainly distin-

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guished in English letters "Kirin Beer" and "Pear's Soap."

"You seem impressed with the drop rag," grinned Charlie Brown.

"Yes, I—I can't understand," I returned, "how Pear's Soap and Kirin Beer got into the ancient literature of this topsy-turvy Eastern empire."

"Ancient literature!" giggled Pinkie. "Don't you know the Japs are ahead of the world on advertising? Those inscriptions on that curtain are well paid for placards recommending everything from a jinrikisha to a popular tea house. Pear's Soap and Kirin Beer, of course, get in their showing. At the smaller theatres, I've seen ads of Sapolio and Hunter Rye Whiskey and Ripans."

"Oh, how this destroys the romance of the place," I said.

"Not a bit," dissented Miss Caldwell. "Wait till the curtain goes up again and you'll forget all about it. They've got a fire effect in the next act that beats anything I ever saw in the United States."

This I find is true. No such extraordinarily vivid scenic representation of conflagration ever impressed me in a theatre before.

So the performance went on. But of a sudden everything was obliterated from my mind and I had

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eyes only for one being on the stage. It was the fourth and last act of the tragedy. An actor who played a somewhat minor role, that of the ghost of a noble *Daimio* family, was coming on the stage.

To appropriately herald the supernatural, the performer on the bass drum was beating a solo that would have made Wagner think himself in a mixture of Walhalla and Mount Vesuvius. The audience was looking sadly and sympathetically upon this spirit-relic of the past, strutting about in the curious trailing antique trousers that gave the ghost the appearance of walking on his knees, but I with eyes starting almost out of my head saw before me the thin, expressive, dominant lips, the firmly chiseled almost Grecian nose, the strong, dark, romantic eyes, the very being that had rescued me from automobile death in Meriden, Connecticut.

Then his voice smote my ear. But, oh, that was not the same. It was at times a squeaking, creaking, high falsetto, then a portentious basso, but always in that horrible, peculiar rasping monotone of a Japanese actor when he thinks he has a great opportunity. It made me squirm upon my cushions, but still my eyes followed this bombastic footlight relic of the past, and once when he dropped into a colloquial tone for comedy effect—ghosts are comedians as well as

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tragedians on the Japanese stage—it was the same voice that had said in far away Connecticut: "Some one must value you—very highly, honored young lady."

"Who is it?" I whispered under my breath.

"Oh, that's a second rate actor called Kamu Kiguro," remarked Mr. Brown, consulting what they call a playbill in Japan.

"Why," I falter, "he looks like——"

"Not like himself, you can bet," whispers Charlie. "That's a wonderful make-up. He is representing some old *daimio* swell for this ghost business. In the next comedy he is down for a woman, and you can bet he will be a Japanese geisha to the life. Off the stage Kamu Kiguro is as happy a faced little fellow as plays a bad game of American poker in Japan. His face probably now represents one of the Sendai family. He never gets tired of telling how his ancestors were *samurai* retainers of that great *daimio* house in the days of the Shogunate."

The name strikes me with an electric shock. It is the name I know, that of the gentleman who rescued me, Captain Okashi Sendai.

"Why, you seem interested in the ghost," whispers Miss Caldwell in her lowest voice.

"Sendai—I know one or two of the Sendai," ob-

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serves Baron Schevitch. "Tell you about them after the performance, if you like."

With this information I am compelled to be content until after we leave the theatre. For chatter in a Tokyo auditorium is frowned down upon much more strongly than in a New York opera house; though the ghost looks so much like my Connecticut savior that when he is on the stage, I devour him with my eyes, and, thinking of him, after the curtain has fallen on the tragedy, pay little attention to some pretty dancing Japanese girls.

We do not wait for the comedy as we are anxious to go to the river, Mr. Brown suggesting it will be about time for the fireworks to begin.

"Fireworks in the daytime?" I ejaculate, as we emerge from the theatre. "It is not yet dusk!"

"That is the time this topsy-turvy nation gets in some of its greatest pyrotechnic effects," laughs the Russian Baron as he assists me into the carriage.

"Now the Sendai family," I say eagerly.

"Tell you about them, Miss Armstrong, when we reach the quiet of the river," remarks my escort; for even Japanese crowds, at times, become noisy and some display towards the Sumida Gawa has excited their outcries.

Quite shortly, by the aid of our runner who acted as

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guide, we succeeded in reaching the boat Mr. Brown had engaged for us, which was lying in a moat or canal awaiting us. This bark, in appearance not so unlike a sawed-off and very clumsy Venetian gondola, was exceedingly clean from stem to stern, and had a very comfortable house or cabin upon it that would keep us from the last of the sun's rays. It was manned by two half nude coolies to pole it in the river and steered by another boatman who managed a big oar at the stern.

"We have everything here not only for comfort and convenience, but also a regular water picnic," remarked Mr. Brown, jumping Miss Pinkie over its gunwale and waving his hand towards an attendant who was setting out quite a sumptuous repast in the cabin for us.

"Besides, my maid, Nana San, is here," laughed Miss Caldwell, "with everything we want." There was a suggestive strain in Pinkie's voice that recalled her proposition to me and made me giggle nervously as the maid gave salutation to her mistress.

But neither Pinkie nor I cared to eat just at the moment. We preferred to look. We were being poled down a rather narrow canal which had formerly been one of the old moats of the city; in places its sluggish waters were full of pink lotus flowers. Passing rather

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commonplace warehouses and some rickety looking Venetian stairways that led up through high walls from the water to the streets, which were connected by bridges, we approached the river. Here the loungers became more numerous and more excited and the scene more that of festivity.

Five minutes after, we enter the river itself. Upon its waters are a jam of boats, at times so crowded together that an active man can pass from one bank of the Sumida, here some three hundred yards wide, to the other dry shod, jumping from barge to barge.

These boats, some of them large, some with even two story cabins, are all crowded by the Japanese—in families, in groups, in masses—one carrying half a dozen officers in full uniform is close beside us.

Through this mass we gradually are poled towards the place of fireworks—*daytime* fireworks. I am about to ask the Baron as to the Sendai; but suddenly Pinkie gives a scream of admiration. A rocket goes up, and as it explodes in the clear blue air a flock of pigeons seem to spring from it and wing their way through the sunlight. The next displays a dragon in aerial flight, swishing his tail and smoke coming from his eyes. Then up goes another rocket and a great bird released by the explosion flaps its wings and flies off into the clear blue ether. After

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this come smoke clouds and other wondrous effects.

Then we all grow hungry and indulge in a picnic repast washed down by iced champagne. As we finish, and the gentlemen light their cigars, night descends, the river becomes a swaying sea of lanterns, not only upon its own liquid surface, but both its banks, some of the tea-houses perched high for view and breeze being literally covered with gorgeous hued things whose many bright colors seem to make this soft summer night a kind of Venetian fete.

Upon a big barge next to us is a band playing, not only Japanese music, but every ragtime tune invented in the United States.

Then high up over the lanterns are more bursting rockets, some of them exceedingly fine, breaking into great bunches of various colored flaming ribbons that seem to float about in the air, and weeping willows of molten gold with red flowers.

The pyrotechnic display growing less vivid and Miss Caldwell and Mr. Brown being engaged in a tête-à-tête conversation near the bow of the boat, I say eagerly to the Baron who is smoking a cigar and lounging not far from me at the stern: "Now tell me about the Sendai."

"Oh, the Sendai family is quite a celebrated one in *Dai Nippon.* In former times it was connected with

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that of the Shogun. Its members even now are among the highest nobles in Japan, what you Americans would call 'howling swells.' I know one or two of them here."

"Any of them officers in the army?" I ask, eagerly.

"Yes, I have found them very pleasant fellows to meet, though, of course, I am socially handicapped here, being one of the nation that the Japanese like least."

"Do you know one on the General Staff?" I query, striving to keep undue interest out of my tone.

Schevitch is about to reply to me when he is interrupted by shouts, laughter and screams from neighboring lantern-lighted boats. This commotion commences at the river bank and gradually rolls towards us spreading from barge to barge, which in this portion of the waterway are crowded quite closely together, most of them being only a few feet apart.

"Good heavens, is it an accident, or a thug escaping from a policeman?" I exclaim, as the commotion approaches us rapidly.

"No, I think not," says the Baron. "You notice it is excited laughter rather than dismay."

"Well, whatever it is," I answer, "it is coming this way."

For the yelling has now reached the barge next to

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us and upon its deck has alighted what seems to me in the imperfect illumination a bounding orang-outang. The marvelous agility of the creature is monkey-like. Tripping over the steersman's oar on the neighboring boat, the flying figure would fall upon his face, did he not with wondrous activity and address seize one of the long poles used to propel the barge, and driving it into the water to the bottom of the river, use it as a vaulting instrument and take a flying leap onto the deck of our boat right in front of me.

Here, to my half-frightened scream the new visitor takes off his hat politely and bowing to the deck, says in very good English: "August pardon deign, esteemed lady. Don't disturb your honorable tranquillity. I am not a fugitive criminal, I am merely winning a wager that I made with a fellow actor that I would cross the river dry shod by leaping from boat to boat. It is not a difficult feat for a man whose profession forces him at times to be acrobatic as well as dramatic.

"*Soyanara,*" he continues pompously, with a deck touching bow, "I shall be on the other bank in three minutes."

This grandiloquent address is rendered by an athletic, swallow-tail-coated Japanese with a high stove

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pipe hat, much ruffled and brushed the wrong way. He is about to spring from our boat into the barge beyond when Charlie Brown, who has started up from Miss Pinkie's side, suddenly cries: "Wait a second! Ain't you Kamu Kiguro, the actor?"

"I am known as such in Tokyo," is the reply, "and this is Mr. Brown, the American trader."

"Then here's a young lady with whom you made a mash to-day at the theatre as the ghost," laughs Charlie, "she wants to see you."

Mr. Brown's easy suggestion brings a rather haughty blush upon my face as I gaze upon the Thespian, who remarks: "I am always pleased to make a hit with my audience and do the wishes of the ladies, but—my wager!" continuing apologetically: "You will excuse me; five yen are awaiting me on the other side."

"I will pay the five yen," cries Charlie Brown. "In fact, I will give you ten yen if you stay and entertain us."

"I beg your honored pardon," our visitor draws himself up stiff as a bronze statue, "I am an actor of the theatre, not a travelling mountebank."

"Of course, I understand that thoroughly," remarks Brown. "These young ladies also appreciate it."

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Kiguro bows to both Pinkie and myself, drawing in his breath with that peculiar respiration that indicates in *Dai Nippon* the highest reverence.

Then Pinkie addresses him in Japanese and the sound of his own tongue from an American young lady pleases the pride of the native professional gentleman.

"The greatest actors in the United States sometimes condescend to amuse and entertain people outside of the walls of their playhouses," explains Miss Caldwell.

"Yes, I have read of that. Irving, the great English mimic, appeared before the King at Windsor Castle." Kiguro's tone is mollified. "You say the young lady became interested in my performance of the ghost, one of my minor roles. I lose the wager. I don't accept your pay, Mr. Brown, but to the American young lady I make the *shintaniro*."

Words cannot express the haughty dignity with which Kamu Kiguro makes obeisance to me; then squats at my feet, and gazes up in my face.

In the lantern light, Mr. Kiguro is a very different looking person to the aristocratic ghost he had portrayed at the theatre. His face is not now very much like that of my Connecticut savior, though his height

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is about the same and his figure is perhaps something similar.

"You wish to hear of the theatre in Japan, its rise from the dunghill to the acme of the Mikado's favor?" he remarks, bowing to the deck as he mentions the Imperial name.

"Yes, I am told," I say, "that since His Majesty has witnessed the performance of the late great Danjuro, your profession has become——"

"More than reputable," interjects the comedian, "exalted! Only thirty years ago, actors in the census were classed and numbered as the beasts of the field; now we have become not only as other men, but above most of them. Otherwise I of the *samurai* class would never have trod the boards. You see I use American stage terms for the esteemed young lady's benefit. I picked them up from an honored Yankee dramatic agent who wished a few years ago to engage the great Danjuro for an American tour."

"Yes, and you use perfect English," I say.

"English? I am familiar with French, likewise German and Chinese," rejoins Kiguro, with that modesty which is as much a part of his profession in Japan as in the United States. "Besides, I sing. In addition, I dance. Likewise, I do acrobatic feats at times, fence with two swords after the ancient method

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and play women's roles as well. They say I am beautiful as a cherry tree in women's parts." Then turning his eyes on me, he asks: "But why did I interest you so intensely when I played the ghost? I have not much opportunity in it. A ghost cannot die, and death scenes are my strong point. I have taken half an hour to die by poison upon the stage. It is most unfortunate to play the ghost."

"But in that role your face was made up to represent a living man?" I ask eagerly.

"One of the grand Sendai," returns Kamu Kiguro, "the great *Daimio* family to which my fathers were *samurai* and I still hold allegiance, the ancient house that I love. When I am to be an aristocratic ghost, I become the most aristocratic spirit possible. I transform myself to an image of the highest nobility, and I can make myself a likeness of anything— dragons, dwarfs, genii, gnomes, *kami,* spirits, geisha girls— *anything!* I am an actor."

As I listen to him, I know he is an actor. I have met one or two Thespians in the United States and am satisfied Mr. Kiguro is of the profession. "Yes, I have heard something of the Sendai family," I remark. "I am interested somewhat in them. Can you tell me something of them?"

"Something of them? I know their annals for two

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thousand years. You have seen the great canal running through a portion of the city—that was dug by Prince Sendai in old times," says Kiguro proudly.

"What, with his own hands!" I scream, thinking of the extraordinary labor necessary for such a gigantic public work. "That must have been in the mythical days."

"Oh, no; it is a reality. But not with his own hands. The great Sendai touched the sword, not the spade. I will tell you about the grand Prince Sendai. It is like a Lotus romance in these grovelling days when men love money more than they do pleasure. In the old days when the Shogun was the power, before modern reforms had destroyed the race of the two swords, Prince Sendai had the honor of being the most glorious spendthrift the world has ever seen. His steady order at a tea-house was 'The best in the world and all there is of it!'"

"Saint Vladimir, that's a glorious command!" cries the Russian Baron. "Let me remember it; it will make a hit in the cafés of St. Petersburg. 'The best in the world and all there is of it!'"

"By Jove!" laughs Brown, "when I get back to New York that shall be my cry at the Waldorf-Astoria; that will make me famous."

"Or bankrupt!" observes Miss Pinkie severely.

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"Do his descendants give such orders now?" I ask, rather horrified at the immensity of such extravagance.

"No; there is no man in the world but one, about whom I have heard Americans talk, who dare give such an order to-day, and that's the celebrated coal-oil baron, Rockyman. You see I know a good deal about your country," observes Kiguro complaisantly to me.

"Yes, and Rockyman won't do it," giggles Pinkie. "Mush and milk is his limit, I am told."

"Though they say he would pay high for a stomach," jeers Mr. Brown.

"Well, in those ancient days the Japanese nobles were rich," continues Kiguro earnestly. "A great *Daimio* had an income of sometimes two hundred thousand *koku.* Now if he has twenty thousand he is lucky."

"But about the canal?" I ask.

"Oh yes, Sendai's canal. The Prince Sendai got to—what you Americans call—burning his money. One evening he hired the *Yoshiwara,* locked up the whole district, because Sendai wished to love. What are you blinking at me for, Mr. Brown? You know the *Yoshiwara;* I've seen you there."

"Oh nothing, only we don't talk about these things

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in the presence of ladies in America," mutters Charlie, biting his cigar savagely.

"Well, this and some other extravagances such as having five hundred geisha perform the *'No'* dance every time he drank *saké* caused the government to turn its eyes upon Sendai," says the Thespian. "So the Shogun said if Sendai wishes to burn up his money he had better burn it to some advantage to the government. Therefore he ordered the prince to dig a moat around the highest hill in Yeddo, upon which stood the Shogun's palace. It took several thousand men several years to dig this ditch and is appropriately known as 'Sendai's Sorrow.' It cost so much money, they say Sendai filled it with his tears."

"But is that all Sendai was celebrated for?" I ask.

"Oh no, if he was a spendthrift, he was also a warrior. Sendai could take off an enemy's head with a single sword stroke like I do on the stage. Come when the regular season opens and see me fight at the Kabukiza. Fifty sword wounds shall not kill me till I perform my sword feat. My fighting is not my least accomplishment." The modest actor bows before me.

"But the present members of the family?" I ask,

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the modern Sendai being more in my mind than the ancient spendthrift.

"Ah yes; the prince—the old prince is retired to his estates and now lives near Kioto; but his son, the captain—"

"Ah yes, the captain," I whisper.

"Captain Okashi Sendai of the General Staff, the expert engineer, the great bridge builder, the profound mathematician, he who is even in modern democracy the most aristocratic representative of one of the great houses of Japan, the man to whom I bow and say: 'Prince and master, here is thy *samurai* for life or for death as it pleases thee to order.'" Love and reverence have flown into the comedian's eyes and have changed him into a jeune premier. He would make his hit as a lover on the American stage. Such adoration, such devotion, such romantic emotion I have never seen in the human face before.

Kiguro's expressive countenance becomes noble in its generous fealty; his dark eyes glow with the ardor of self-sacrifice, if necessary, for this being whom he seems to adore with that kind of tribal worship that existed in the mediæval days of Scotland, when the humblest gillie in the clan thought the best use to which he could put his life was to give it up gallantly and unasked for his beloved chief.

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"You love Captain Sendai?" I ask.

"Love *him!* The blood of my ancestors has adored the blood of his ancestors for a thousand years; and His Highness has condescended to say to Kiguro: 'Fight as well on the field of battle as you do upon the stage of the theatre, and you will be as good as your ancestor, the sword maker of Ozaka.' Some day perhaps I will show the young Prince—"

"The Prince!" I ejaculate.

"Certainly, though he drops his titles for his military rank. My lord and master is a peculiar gentleman. He says captain is his rank in the army and captain he will be until he becomes a major."

"He was once in America?" I interrupt eagerly.

"Captain Okashi Sendai has been half a dozen times across the ocean," remarks Kiguro proudly. "He was educated partly at Harvard, also in the Oxford and the Heidelberg. Once I had the honor of accompanying His Highness to America. There to study the foreign playhouse, I took a juggling engagement at Koster and Bial's."

Noting a look of amazement on my face, Mr. Kiguro contemplatively picks up half a dozen oranges that are lying on the table of the cabin and abstractedly does such "stunts" with them that I gaze at him open mouthed; finishing his performance by catching four

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in his left hand, one in his mouth, and, suddenly becoming erect, permits the last flying orange to lodge upon the top of his head. "In addition!" He picks up the very thin, straight rattan cane of the Russian Baron and suddenly swallows nearly thirty inches of it. "Shall I change this into a snake?" he says after he disgorges it.

"Oh, don't!" I scream.

"I couldn't," he laughs merrily.

"Besides!" He throws the six oranges again into the air and flings after them five table forks, transfixing them in mid-career; then with another fork in his mouth, after an extraordinary contortion, catches the last descending orange spitted upon it.

"Bravo!" cries Brown, who with Miss Pinkie, greets this peculiar exhibition with a salvo of American hand claps.

"Such acrobatics should make you thirsty," laughs Schevitch.

"It does, honored Baron, but I will only take a cup of *saké*. Nothing more. No refreshments, especially no American whiskey, Mr. Brown. That always makes me light headed." Drinking a cup of the national beverage, Kiguro remarks: "Honored ladies, once more *sayonara*. I will yet win my wager, though the boats are getting further apart."

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After a low bow to everyone of us, he plunges the pole he had brought on board with him into the river and bounds like a flying fish from one barge to another, the screams and excitement of his sudden nautical appearances and disappearances on the various boats dying away towards the other bank of the Sumida.

"Well, what do you think of him?" laughs Charlie Brown.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Armstrong is not thinking of the comedian," remarks Baron Schevitch acutely. "She is thinking of the Prince."

"Cracky, I believe you've struck it! She's blushing!" guffaws Brown.

While Pinkie, clapping her hands, whispers roguishly in my red ear: "Was it Prince Sendai who saved you from the automobile?"

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CHAPTER II.

THE TEA-HOUSE BY THE SUMIDA.

My curiosity as to the Sendai family seems to have a curious effect upon the Baron. Don't think that I am a vain girl, but I cannot help noting events. The Baron grows moody. Mr. Brown and Miss Caldwell have wandered nearer the bow of the boat again. Some few words that young lady is saying seem to make Charlie exceedingly mirthful. Good heavens, is she suggesting to him her automobile suspicions?

Whether she is or not, the Baron begins to question me in a rather anxious manner. "Why do you, Miss Armstrong, take such an interest in this Japanese family?" he affects to laugh.

"Because I am going to write a book on Japan," I answer, flippantly.

"Ah, your interest is only a literary one," he observes. "Then why were you so eager to discover if Captain Okashi Sendai had ever been in the United States?"

"Because if he has, he has probably heard of my father as a great bridge builder and Dad can perhaps

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get a contract for some of the railway structures here. Captain Sendai apparently from the comedian's remarks, is connected with that branch of semi-military, semi-civil construction in Japan. You see, I am a Yankee, therefore business to the finger tips," I rejoin glibly.

With this answer Serge Schevitch, stroking his long blond moustache reflectively, is compelled to be satisfied.

"You know Captain Prince Sendai?" I inquire.

"Yes, I know him as I know other officers here, though not so well as some of them," answers the Baron. To this he adds, surlily: "Captain Okashi Sendai won't interest a girl like you. He is a student as well as a soldier."

"I am told," I remark, maliciously, "that to be a true soldier now it is necessary to be a student, something you Russian officers, I imagine, at times forget in the delights of social life."

"Oh, if you mean that we will ever suffer should it come to an armed dispute between us and the Japs," sneers the Baron, "you will find that six feet men can whip five feet monkeys. But by Saint Vladimir, this nation of fireworks, geisha girls and jugglers will never be mad enough to dare confront the Colossus not only of Asia but of Europe."

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"Pretty good fireworks," I jeer, pointing to a beautiful exploding rocket. "Very charming geisha girls," I laugh, and direct my gaze to a large nearby barge upon whose deck a number of dark eyed brunettes are dancing to music of their *samisens* whose strings are twanging merrily. "Not bad jugglers," I look at the spitted oranges left lying upon our deck by Kiguro.

To this the Baron says generously: "You're right! What the Japs do, they do well. Did you ever see a more beautiful fete?" and seats himself quite close beside me.

The scene is even more attractive at night than by day. I agree with my escort that it is a very lovely sight.

The fireworks having subsided, supper appears everywhere. Our own boatmen are taking their *saké* and cooked beans at the extreme bow of the boat. Pleasant meals are in progress on nearly all the barges, some quite elaborate, some served European style, others in the Japanese manner. Music is omnipresent, from the big brass band to the sharp voiced *samisens* and *kotos,* the Japanese banjo and harp; even in a small row-boat a bronze figure is beating a drum. Since darkness has come upon us, the whole river, banks and waterway, seems a glow of light from

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myriads of lanterns, some of the overhanging tea-houses being covered with thousands of paper moons.

The scene is romantic; apparently the Baron becomes romantic too. After the manner of European suitors, he commences to whisper soft, flowery and exceedingly exaggerated compliments into my blushing ear. These after the manner of the chippy American girl, I adroitly turn to nothings.

Then, with some remarks on the dazzling rings that adorn my fingers, he tries to take my hand. This means a good deal more from a Russian than from an American; so I deftly keep my fingers from his grasp.

From near the bow of our barge I think I hear Miss Caldwell whisper: "Charlie, behave yourself!"

Something must be done or the Baron will make love to me, which I don't want him to do. A one-sided romance always destroys friendship, and the Baron isn't a bad fellow. I am about to raise my voice and cry to Pinkie that we had better be going to the hotel, when Pinkie calls to me: "Mr. Brown has just seen in that tea-house," she points to one near which we are drifting, "some Yokohama friends." Then she springs up and exclaims: "There's Billy Benson, now, of the Oriental Bank. See, he's beckoning to you, Charlie!"

In proof of this, Benson's voice, a full, round, Eng-

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lish one, rings out from the Rising Sun tea-house balcony: "I say, Brown, just run up here a minute. I've got a message for you from a girl in Yokohama."

"Let it wait!" shouts Brown in embarrassed answer.

"But the girl in Yokohama can't wait," laughs Pinkie. "Besides, there's young Astrakan, one of your Legation confreres, Baron Schevitch. Monsieur Astrakan!" she calls vivaciously, "Monsieur Schevitch has a message for you from me. Baron, please run up and give him my communication; I can't call it out for everybody to hear." She whispers a few sentences into Serge's ear.

"Oh certainly, Miss Caldwell!" answers Schevitch with the external politeness well bred foreigners all have.

"Now both of you gentlemen get on shore," urges Pinkie. At her signal, our boat has been poled close to the steps that lead up to the tea-house. "You can stay and have a drink of champagne with your friends before you return to us," Miss Caldwell suggests.

"Hi, come up the steps, lazy Brown!" cries Benson. "We've got a bottle waiting on ice for you."

Thus compelled, the two gentlemen say they won't be more than a few minutes, step on shore and run up the stairs.

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Then suddenly Pinkie turns to me and whispers to my astounded ears: "Now's our time; now we do the lightning change act into geisha girls."

"You don't mean to say you intend seriously to attempt that wild, crazy freak you shocked me by suggesting at the hotel this afternoon," I remark in severe tone.

"Don't I! And you've got to do it, too!"

"What!" I ejaculate, "become a geisha for this evening? How dare you!"

"Why, you needn't look at me as if I were making some very horrible proposition," laughs Pinkie. "Aren't you Japanese enough to be aware that a Tokyo geisha is quite often a very respectable member of society. I know some foreigners have the absurd idea that they are of the demi-monde. That is not so. In Treaty-Ports geisha girls are quite often associated with *yoshiwara joros,* sometimes probably correctly when they play the infamous game of *'Chon Kino'* for the benefit of drunken sailors. But here, she is simply a girl who can dance, sing, play on musical instruments and tell the latest stories and jokes as she passes *saké* and refreshments about and makes herself generally agreeable at entertainments given by Japanese. A good many of them live with their own families, though some are indentured to the people who

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educate them for their profession; that is, teach them to play the *koto* and *samisen,* to sing, dance and relate the brightest jokes, the most interesting tales and wittiest and most up-to-date *bon mots* current in Japan. Of course, rumor has it that for certain sums of money, the indenture papers of the most charming geishas have at times passed from their direct employers to the hands of gentlemen of the nobility, who are willing to pay great prices for fascinating beauty, though many of the geishas marry, and marry well and respectably. In a word, a geisha may be virtuous as a Diana, though perhaps some of them are not quite so straight-laced. However, I think that the attendance of a Japanese fashionable tea-house, geishas thrown in, would average much better in morality than many a first class New York oyster house. You yourself have been in Rector's or Shanley's—I believe that's what you call them—haven't you?" She looks at me searchingly.

"Yes, once, in company with a large theatre party," I mutter apologetically.

"Well, this geisha trick will be the very acme of fun, if you dare to do it. I have everything prepared. Nana San!" Pinkie calls and claps her hands.

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"Hai, Mistress!" answers the maid and stands before her.

"If I know Benson, our cavaliers won't get away from his hospitality and champagne for some considerable time. Now we'll slip into our *kimonos*," Miss Caldwell says hurriedly. "My maid has two first class geisha costumes and the necessary paints and cosmetics to make us look with our hair drawn back and our eye-brows well blackened and straightened quite Japanese in appearance! So into the cabin with you!" Pinkie gigglingly pushes me into the illuminated deck house and draws its paper screens.

Half laughing, half protesting, I let Miss Caldwell and her maid have their way with me. Five minutes after I give a slightly affrighted shudder as I gaze upon myself in a little mirror, transformed into a maiden of *Dai Nippon*. My hair, which is ordinarily brown, has been drawn back from my forehead till my eyes seem to start out of my head; my *coiffure*, usually Pompadour, having been plastered down by a black cosmetic and skewered up Japanese way. My eye-brows have been straightened and darkened, my cheeks brillantly rouged and my form is displayed in a clinging *kimono* of exquisite silk, which is girded at the waist by a broad sash and tied behind my back in an immense square yet bulging knot.

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"Mercy, don't your white arms look enticing as they glide out of the big sleeves; never you wear corset again, Hilda!" whispers Pinkie in exaggerated compliment into my ear. "You're too fetching in *kimono*. Probably you will have some trouble with those flat slippers that you cannot keep on your pretty feet. Now turn your toes in and give yourself the shuffling gait of the Japanese article," she laughs as I essay a pigeontoed walk.

Then as Miss Pinkie begins her own transformation, I again dissent: "Murder! What a row Dad will kick up when he hears of this wild prank."

"Don't let Dad hear! I'm not going to tell him."

"Besides, it's nonsense. How am I going to speak Japanese?" I falter.

"Why, Silly, you don't suppose I mean for us to leave this boat. Of course, to be *geishas* to a Japanese crowd would mean instant discovery. But on our own barge here for Baron Serge Schevitch and Mr. Charlie Brown, it will be what in American slang you call a 'lead pipe cinch.' Jabber any choctaw to Charlie Brown and he will think it Nihonese, though he pretends to know something about the East. As for the Baron, he has such a haughty contempt for this country of the Rising Sun which he thinks aspires to be the rival of 'All the Russias' that I don't

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believe he has taken the trouble to learn a single native phrase. In addition, a good many *geishas* talk a little English now. Such phrases as 'Goodie bye,' 'Thanka you' and 'I lobe you,' with a Japanese inflexion will sound very fetching and not at all suspicious from your red lips. Just let me give them a touch of vermilion."

"Oh, I could never say the last," I mutter diffidently.

"Pish, *geishas* are not too bashful!" laughs Pinkie. "Play your part up to the handle."

By this time Miss Caldwell has become Japanese. Apparently she has done this trick before in her life; from under her maid's hands she steps out to my eyes a veritable geisha maiden and looking pretty as a plum blossom.

"Permit me to return your words," I say. "You should never wear anything but a *kimono*. You have the loveliest white arms, the plumpest rounded neck; you have—"

"Stop your compliments," laughs Pinkie. "Tell me if I've Japanese eye-brows."

"You have," I say, "also cherry lips,"and am about to kiss her, but she stops me, saying: "Geisha girls never kiss; they never hold hands either. You are to

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be called 'One Thousand Joys,' and I shall answer to *'OHaru,'* the Jap for Spring Time."

"Here's my card, with 'Gone home—you stayed in the tea-house too long. P. Caldwell.'" For the mystification of our escorts Pinkie places the missive on the cabin table.

"Oh, it will be such fun!" She claps her hands. Then a rather curious blushing look comes into her Japanese face as she laughs: "I wonder how our cavaliers will treat us when they suppose us *geisha?*"

"Yes, I wonder how they will," I say suspiciously. "Mr. Brown has lived in Treaty Ports and probably regards the *geisha* from a Treaty Port standpoint."

"Nevertheless, if you are in for an original adventure, here it is at your hand," urges Miss Pinkie. "Besides, by it we will probably find out what those gentlemen really think of us. I imagine Charlie Brown believes me very too-too, and as for the Baron, I have seen him look at you—"

"Never mind how you have seen him look at me," I say savagely, "I don't care how he looks."

"Oh yes, I forgot," jeers Miss Caldwell, "You are interested in a Japanese automobile expert."

"No, I am not!" I answer.

"But if we are to be geisha we must get to business before the gentlemen return." Pinkie draws the

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paper screens from about the cabin, and her maid producing a *koto,* a flat Japanese harp-like instrument, places it on the cabin roof.

"Hurry, Hilda, climb up after it, now!" commands my companion, taking from Nana's hand a *samisen.*

"Oh mercy," I exclaim as we clamber onto the cabin roof, "I've lost a slipper!"

"Shucks, clinch your toes in it, as I do," suggests Pinkie, as she shoves the heelless sandal again upon my foot. "Now let's get to work!"

"But I don't know how to play this," I mutter, gazing at the *koto.*

"Well, of course, you can't play it, but you can play at it! Accompany me, strike these chords, see! You know enough about general music to understand."

I have had a few lessons on this curious instrument and can do as she directs.

"Now I'll attend to the rest," whispers Miss Caldwell. "Jupiter, won't Charlie Brown and the Baron be astonished when they hear native music, look out of the windows of the tea-house and see *geisha* girls upon the cabin of their boat. What do you think of this for a Jap melody?" Pinkie bursts into a native stanza, the chorus of which, carelessly translated, being:

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"The dream of a sinner
"Waiting for dinner,
"Is *saké! saké! saké!*

Singing the Japanese words in the sweet plaintive manner that is common to the country and emphasizing the accompaniment on her *samisen* with some of those curious glissandos peculiar to native music, Pinkie seems quite Japanese.

In this I aid her as best I can upon the *koto;* though there is no response from the neighboring tea-house except the popping of some champagne corks that floats over the noise from its open windows.

We keep our music up until Pinkie impatiently whispers to me: "The wretches in there think more of champagne than they do of us."

"They are thinking of jackpots, too," I remark, viciously. "I heard Benson's voice calling, 'Go you ten better.'"

"Then they are good for some time," mutters Pinkie. "Benson is the most inveterate poker-player in Yokohama."

During this time our coolies have crawled to the bow and gone contently to sleep. Most of the boats have drifted from us as the band on the big barge some little distance down the stream has struck up a

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Sousa march, and the concourse of loiterers upon the bank have sauntered nearer to it, but those between us and the tea-house, though they have grown less numerous, are more boisterous. Even mild *saké* seems to have made some little progress upon Japanese heads.

"Will those wanderers never come!" whispers Pinkie.

At her suggestion, we both commence to jabber, I, a weird lingo of my own, Miss Caldwell in her best Japanese. She tells me that she is crying: "Honored, honored gentlemen, look about you if you would see pretty girls who can amuse you."

A moment after there are sounds of real drunkenness along the river bank from foreigners, judging by the German and English exclamations and oaths that gradually draw near.

"Nothing to worry about," remarks my companion unconcernedly to me. "This is an orderly nation. The only disorder in it comes from drunken foreigners, and here is an intoxicated jack-tar crowd from Yokohama at the head of the stairs gazing at us."

"Try and make our escorts hear and come back in a hurry!" I suggest nervously.

Actuated by this idea, my companion bursts into another Japanese song with great emphasis.

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Pinkie's voice is too attractive, for a moment after Miss Caldwell screams: "Oh good lordy!" as three men, apparently sailors, stagger down the steps to the landing and jump aboard our barge.

"They must be drunk or they'd never dare to do that!" whispers Pinkie dismayed, gazing about for help, for the river is partly deserted now and there are no boats very near us.

The actions and voices of our captors proclaim the accuracy of Miss Caldwell's divination. "Blow my eyes," stammers one, mixing his speech with drunken gutterals, "if these two black-eyed lassies ain't better lookers than the Yokohama and Shanghai fairies, I'll never drink rum ag'in, Dutch Sam!"

"*Verdamt,* der one mit der banjo is *mein liebsche!*" answers the German sailor man.

"Here, stop! stop! get ashore!" I cry to them savagely, thinking to impress them with my English.

But this only seems to add to my attractions. "Bully!" cries the other man, staggering towards the cabin. "Here's a Jap girl whose lingo I can get onto. She chirps as dandy English as Portsmouth Sal, Hong Kong way. Come down into the cabin, Pretty, and we'll play *'Chon Kino.'*"

"Wretch, don't you dare!" whispers Pinkie shudderingly; then gives a little smothered, plaintive

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scream as she is unceremoniously grabbed by her ankle and yanked from the top of the cabin to the deck.

Before I can utter a cry, someone has seized me and pulled me into the cabin also. Three fœtid breaths, suffused with rum, turn me almost sick as a jack-tar they call Red-Headed Bill dressed in store clothes for this Tokyo spree, glares into my face in ferocious jocularity and says, laughingly: "No nonsense! no airs! Here's your *samisen!*" clapping the square-drum banjo into the dismayed Pinkie's hand. Then he holds up a brawny, hairy arm, tatooed with anchors from wrist to elbow, and commands in savage good humor: "Now you sing while we do the Treaty-Port *'Chon Kino'* forfeit game. Everyone that loses, gal or lad, takes off sail at each forfeit, and when I cry 'Game's up!' the one that's got the least rigging on and shows the most skin wins five Chinese dollars!"

"You miserable drunken wretch!" cries Miss Caldwell, and viciously smashes the *samisen* over the fellow's head, while I raise up my voice and shriek: "Help! aid!"

"*Du bist* Japanese *katze* spitting!" cries Dutch Sam, pursuing Pinkie as she springs from the cabin, flies along the deck, jumps on to the landing place and dashes wildly up the steps towards the tea-house.

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Frantically I dart after her, Red-Headed Bill staggering drunkenly in my wake, snarling: "Bloomin' geishas, putting on airs when I want to shove money into yer pockets!"

His tatooed arms would close about me, but just at this moment Miss Caldwell's Japanese maid, who has been aroused by the commotion, screams from the bow of our boat: *"Junsa! junsa!"*

Then, as our persecutors reach the bank, three or four athletic little policemen dart upon them and subdue and bind them helpless in *jiu-jitsu* fashion, murmuring politely: *" Okino doku sama!"* which, I believe means "Sorry to do you up, august gentlemen." In a moment Dutch Sam and Red-Headed Bill are as inert as bales of goods.

Noting this from the security of the tea-house entrance, in which I have taken refuge, I would return to our boat, but Miss Caldwell's hand is upon my arm. Panting from fright and exertion, she is whispering: "Not yet! There would be police inquiry; our names would get into the papers, and then——"

I answer this by a sickly shudder. I know my Dad would make an awful row if this escapade ever came to his ears.

"We must get to our escorts now," whispers Pinkie, for quite a crowd has gathered about our barge and

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the landing steps. With this she leads me into the doors of the Rising Sun Tea-House, one of the biggest and most fashionable in Tokyo; from its open windows floats the hum of many merry parties.

Just at this moment a matronly looking Japanese woman, coming from the interior of the house, authoritatively taps Pinkie on the shoulder with her fan and says something in Japanese. To this Miss Caldwell makes humble salaam, and I follow her lead with a native bending of the back.

Then my companion says what she afterward explains to me is the Japanese for "American Poker Party," and the woman apparently understanding, leads us up the lacquered stairway and along a passage on the great second floor.

The babble of girls' voices in soft Yedo dialect is about us, for no male waiters ever do duty in a Japanese tea-house. The paper lanterns shed a subdued light on lacquered floors and unsubstantial, decorated, screen-like walls. The thumbing of *kotos* and *samisens* and the strains of singing geishas tell of festival where the yellow *saké* flows, though champagne and other wines are for European customers as well.

All the time I am angry enough to box Pinkie's ears for getting me into such a scrape.

The noise of the merry-making parties about us,

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screened off in their various rooms by paper partitions, is monotonously impressive, but gives us a curious retirement. Where everybody can hear, nobody apparently wants to listen; though I think I distinguish Charlie Brown's voice, muffled by many paper screens, saying: "Just another bot before we go!" But the sound is so confused by other voices I can't tell exactly where it comes from. Leading us into a small ante-room connected with a larger apartment, the Japanese woman points with her fan to a soft bamboo mat; and Pinkie squatting upon it on her knees, I do likewise. Then the woman says some words that make Miss Caldwell's eyes roll under her elongated eyebrows, and retires, drawing the sliding door.

"I fear the fool woman has made a mistake," Pinkie whispers hurriedly; "but she said we were expected."

"Certainly, but how could *we* be expected?" I ask anxiously.

"Oh, easy enough. There are half a hundred thousand geishas in Tokyo, and your struggles to keep your feet in your slippers made you turn in your toes quite like a native."

Pinkie goes to the sliding door which has been drawn upon us, tries to shove it open, and whispers: "Mercy, this is curious. Locks are scarce in this

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country, but the woman seems to have slipped the wooden bar outside upon us." Then listening to some Japanese exclamations in men's voices from the next room, she emits a shuddering giggle and mutters: "We are in for it!"

"What do you mean?"

"Why the Japanese that I hear from that room tells me that those *Daimios* and nobles in there are playing poker and *we are being gambled for.*"

"Horror!" I gasp. "Let us get out!"

"No, no, stop! Have some sense!" whispers my mentor desperately. "A commotion now will surely make us the gossip of Tokyo. Japanese are always gentlemen. When they discover their mistake, they will be exceedingly polite; not like those drunken brutes of sailors out there. Besides, we must keep this out of the newspapers. Tokyo as well as American journals print racy articles."

"Oh, if father hears!" I shiver; the tears coming quite close to my eyes as I think of the particular Cain the Honorable Peter Milliken Armstrong of the Meriden Bridge-Building Company, member of the New Haven Legislature, will raise, if he knows his daughter is in any such horrible escapade as this in a Japanese tea-house! Then I whisper with lips that

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would be pale but for the vermilion on them: "What are they saying?"

"Wait," says my companion, and sinks down in abject attitude upon the mat. "Do the same; be a geisha for a minute," she entreats. "The woman's got us to the wrong room."

I prostrate myself beside her.

Then Pinkie opens the sliding door a little and we peep cautiously into the room next to us.

Four Japanese swells are seated having a game of American poker. This is easily apparent without their words by the piles of chips in front of them and the manner in which their hands are discarded and drawn to. They are refreshing themselves occasionally by warm *saké* presented by attendant maidens.

Two of them are dressed in elaborate European swallow-tail suits. Another is arrayed in a gaudy old-fashioned *Daimio* costume such as I saw it at the theatre, minus the two swords. The last, whose face I cannot see as his back is towards me, is in the uniform of the Japanese Army.

As I gaze, the woman who has brought us into the tea-house, enters the room and, with elaborate bending of the body, says to the *Daimio* some low words and then retires.

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As the cards pass about, one of the swallow-tail coated gentlemen and the *Daimio* smoke silver pipes, Japanese style. The other in European dress consumes at least a cigarette a minute, while the officer puffs coolly and leisurely a big Havana cigar.

The play is apparently high.

Pinkie whispers to me excitedly: "The officer has raised the ante five hundred yen and the other, the *Daimio* fellow, has said: 'I'm cleaned out, but I go the identure papers of the girls kneeling upon that mat in there, those upon whom you have put your eyes with longing, honored Captain.'"

"Merciful heavens, they are gambling for us! This is worse than Canfield's!" I shudder, growing red with shame and cold with embarrassed dismay, my feet shaking until they nearly throw off my loose slippers.

Of a sudden Pinkie's eyes grow lurid under the lantern light. She clinches her fists as three of the gamesters burst into a merry laugh.

"What new horror is it?" I gasp.

"Only that—that swallow-tailed wretch opposite to us has proposed as it is table stakes, we be placed upon the table among the other chips. Don't be a fool and try to kick out that door!" Miss Caldwell seizes my

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hand as the cool, incisive voice of the Japanese officer rings throughout the apartment.

"What is he saying?" I whisper.

"Oh, the Japanese military man is remarking that it is humiliation enough for the girls to be wagered without being exposed; that the winner only should look upon them."

Pinkie pulls me onto the mat on my knees beside her, and we gaze upon the show-down, which produces great excitement.

Miss Caldwell whispers: "The *Daimio* with an oath is saying he has got a busted flush; the dress-coated man with threes has thrown his cards on the table; the other is confidently exhibiting a full house, and the fourth, the officer, is saying: 'Prince Satuneza, you don't play poker mathematically. A busted flush is filled only once in two hundred and eighty odd times, and I drew but one card. I had these pretty typewriters pat,' he adds with a laugh as he calmly lays down four queens. Then they are all demanding to play another round, but the Japanese military man declines. He says he's won us girls; that's what he wanted!" mutters Pinkie, clenching her fists in rage.

"The miserable voluptuary!" I whisper, gazing at the successful gamester who, despite his uniform,

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seems almost effeminately vicious as in careless attitude he puffs at his big cigar.

A moment later even the stout-hearted Pinkie begins to tremble as she explains: "The *Daimio* fellow is saying: 'My stakes are in the ante-chamber awaiting you, honored Captain'; and the Captain is suggesting with many courteous words: 'Leave me, honored gentlemen, with my winnings.'"

"Now we will confront the monster!" mutters Miss Caldwell desperately. "He dare not do anything or say anything very disagreeable. Probably the real geishas will arrive in a minute."

The three losing gamblers have departed. The Captain whispers something to the woman, who rapidly withdraws. Suddenly my eyes bulge in my head, for as the Japanese officer claps his hands, to him enters Kamu Kiguro, the actor, and bending down draws in his breath with such humble yet hissing respirations that they make me start. In his flashing eyes are reverence, fealty and love beyond description. He would put his head upon the lacquered floor, but the officer stops him and says as Miss Caldwell interprets: "No, Kiguro, not that feudal salutation of old Nippon; though I know you in your heart have it for me, my *samurai*."

The other breaks forth in flowing Japanese, and

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Pinkie says: "Good heavens, he is thanking him for having won you for him, and the officer is saying: 'Prince Satuneza wouldn't give up the indentures of the girl you wish to marry, but I played him to the last yen he had in his pocket, and then he was willing to wager both his geishas. So the girl is yours to marry, Kiguro, and the other one also, if you want her.'"

"*Iye, Iye,* my honored master, I only love The Thousand Joys. She's the wittiest girl in all Japan."

"The Thousand Joys! How has he got my name?" I falter to Pinkie.

"Oh, that's easily accounted for," answers my mentor. "Half a hundred geishas in this town are called The Thousand Joys."

Then the actor breaks forth, so Miss Caldwell explains: "For this, Master and Prince, when you wish it, my life's blood." Looking out I can see Kiguro's head touches the lacquered floor.

"Better live for me than die for me, my worthy retainer," remarks the officer.

To this Kiguro makes some grand sounding speech, which Pinkie doesn't translate.

"What is he saying?" I ask eagerly.

"Oh," mutters my interpretor, "the Japs are such a free speaking people. Kiguro is promising that there

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shall be no race suicide in his family; that The Thousand Joys shall bear ten boys to fight the Russians. And the other has answered him: 'It is you and I must fight the Russians, not our descendants.'"

As Pinkie delivers the last of this and I blush under my rouge, the Japanese officer claps his hands sharply together and turns towards the sliding doors behind which we kneel.

"*Hai tadaima!*" calls Pinkie desperately, attempting the soft musical voice of Japan. Whispering: "One Thousand Joys, you're wanted," she shoves me into the room, stepping briskly behind me and giving the low salutation of the geisha.

Some roguish deviltry coming into me, I do the same bending act, then pause, covered with an astounded confusion.

For, lifting my eyes, I for the first time see the face of the Japanese captain, and behold not only the countenance of the ghost of the Kabukiza Theatre but the features of the gentleman who a year before had saved me from automobile accident in far away Connecticut. Mentally, I falter: "I ought to have guessed this before!" and embarrassment makes my knees tremble as I wonder: "What will Captain Okashi Sendai think of me in a Japanese tea-house

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presenting myself as a geisha girl carelessly won by him at poker?"

But Kiguro interrupts reflection by crying savagely; what Pinkie afterwards tells me is: "The infamous Prince has paid his bets in false coin. This is not The Thousand Joys I love, but some miserable imitation of her. See, she is ashamed to look me in the face! For this, were it in the short-sword days, either Satuneza or I should commit *hari kiri!*"

But getting some inkling of the actor's meeting, I spring forward and exclaim almost tearfully in English: "This is a miserable mistake! Probably the geisha girls you won are awaiting you below. Oh, sir, believe me, we are American young ladies."

At my embarrassed address, the officer favors me with an astounded yet searching look; then says pleasantly in perfect English: "Those diamond rings that would ransom half the geishas in Japan glistening on your fingers, prove you are indeed an American young lady."

"We only dressed as geishas in our boat to play a joke upon our escorts. Then some drunken sailors coming on board, we were compelled to fly from them to this tea-house," interrupts Pinkie; after a few sentences of rapid explanation, adding: "Here an awful

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mistake occurred, and we were shown into that room, and——"

"Won by me," smiles Captain Sendai. Then bowing to the floor before both Miss Caldwell and myself, he says gallantly: "Such exquisite winnings I would never relinquish—even to my faithful retainer. I presume under the circumstances you wish to preserve your incognitos, though I think beneath that geisha make-up I perceive the features of a young lady who has been pointed out to me on the Tokyo streets as Miss Caldwell, the daughter of one of the American Legation." Gazing at me till my blushes overpower my rouge, he suddenly starts and continues: "Have I not met you before? Don't be afraid, honored young lady. Be you maid, wife or widow, your misadventure will be a Masonic secret to Captain Okashi Sendai."

Here Kiguro striding up abashes me with these awful words: "By the Sun Goddess! the American maiden who became enamored of my ghost which was made up in your image, my master, at the Kabukiza Theatre! It was she who must question me on her barge in eager tones if there was an officer in Tokyo whose face was like to my ghost's visage." Then to me he remarks: "By *Izanagi,* Kamu Kiguro knows thy secret, maiden. Ah, I understand thy red, blush-

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ing cheeks; you wish to acknowledge my prince as thy master and do him honor. Bow with me before him and say that you are his as I am his." Next addressing the officer he makes me blush rosier than my vermilion by observing: "She is very beautiful under her paint, and will please thee, honored *Daimio.*"

Here, knowing truth is my only resource, I say: "Captain Sendai, I did make inquiry as to where I could find you, for I am Miss Hilda Armstrong, the daughter of Peter Milliken Armstrong, of the bridge-building firm of Meriden, whose life you saved from a runaway automobile in Connecticut a year ago, and strode away before I had time to thank you."

At my words, the languid, polite insouciance seems abruptly to leave the Japanese officer. He says suddenly with a start of extreme interest: "Armstrong, the great American contractor for bridges on the Russian railways in Manchuria?"

"Yes," I answer modestly. "He's constructed half the viaducts from Harbin to Port Arthur and a good many in Siberia."

"He is now in Japan?" Captain Sendai's eyes are gazing on me with most complimentary earnestness. I have to confess this, though I am by no means a vain girl.

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"Certainly."

"Then, honored young lady," the Captain thinks deeply for a moment, and adds modestly, "permit me to come to visit you and pay my respects to your father? Can I not have that honor?"

"Oh, yes," I answer blushingly. "My father will be delighted to see you and thank you also for my life."

"Oh, this *is* romantic!" giggles Pinkie. Then with American assurance she says: "Captain Prince Sendai, you can visit me also. I, too, live at the Hotel Imperial."

"But my One Thousand Joys?" interrupts Kiguro. "Satuneza couldn't wager the identures of these ladies who are of another country."

"Your girl is, I think, even now in the next room. The woman of the tea-house has doubtless by this time discovered her mistake," replies the Prince to his *samurai*. "Forget the appearance of these young ladies in this room this evening, as One Thousand Joys whitens her face and drinks three cups of *saké* to you and becomes your bride!"

"Thanks, Prince and Master!" says the actor, and with eyes of love and many grandiloquent, pompous native speeches and much bowing and hissing, he takes his leave. The lofty fealty in his expressive

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face tells me torture will not open his lips to what his *Daimio* says is secret.

"Now, young ladies, just a glass of champagne with me to show you have been my honored guests, and then I will escort you to your barge and turn you over to your cavaliers, who are doubtless concerned as to your disappearance," observes Captain Sendai.

The Prince's manner is courtesy and punctilio itself as he offers us his hospitality, and shortly after leads us down through the softly lighted tea-house to the river bank. Here with elaborate bows to Miss Caldwell and to me, he places us on board our barge.

"Horrors, that wretched Brown and the high playing Russian Baron are still at their poker game!" exclaims Miss Pinkie, standing on tiptoe and gazing at the windows of the tea-house.

"Yes, the delights of jackpots are usually engrossing to Americans; and the Muscovites are generally very high rollers in games of chance," replies Sendai. Lifting his military cap American style, he observes: "I'll step up and tell your escorts that you request their presence." Then turning to me, he remarks: "When I meet you, honored young lady, I hope you will have washed your face and I will again see the charming features I once beheld in Connecticut. You will excuse my not returning to you this evening as

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I have a number of specifications and calculations that compel my immediate attention. I am one of the General Staff and an officer in the Engineer Corps of the Japanese Army. Only military duty would keep me from giving myself the honor and pleasure of further attendance on you both this evening, esteemed young ladies."

As he runs up the steps with military yet precise activity and enters the tea-house, I remark to Pinkie in modest diffidence: "Did you see how the Prince's eyes lighted up when he recognized me as the girl he had rescued in Connecticut?"

"Pish!" exclaims Miss Caldwell in jealous deprecation. "Sendai is only a Japanese prince and you are the vainest girl I ever saw!"

Pinkie is sometimes malicious.

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CHAPTER III.

SENDAI'S BRIDGE.

"Is Prince Sendai a Japanese dude?" I ask my parental a few weeks later. This is after I have noted the languid nonchalance with which the young aristocrat lounges about my parlor in the most immaculate of white linen suits and seems too lazy to do more than puff delicate cigarettes and surprise me with the curious smoke effects he can produce with their vapor in the breezeless summer atmosphere.

"Child, get such fool notions out of your head!" answers the Honorable Peter Armstrong of Meriden, Connecticut. "Sendai is the most up-to-date engineer I ever struck, and I've encountered everything in that line from American designers of East River bridges and Rocky Mountain railways to Von Kepler, the German scientist, who ran the levels across the Ural Mountains and through Siberia."

Whereupon Dad departs to figure upon some of his numerous business ventures and I sit in my parlor at the Imperial Hotel looking out at its beautiful grounds from under an awning and try to believe

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Prince Sendai doesn't love me. I am not the vain girl Miss Caldwell has suggested, but the Prince's delicate attentions and constant visits force me to reflection. In fact, Captain Okashi Sendai has given me a good deal to think about since my geisha escapade. To me he seems a mass of contradictions. Languidly lazy in ladies' company, he wears his uniforms as smartly as any dandy of the Royal Horse Guards Blue at St. James' Palace, London. Though a well traveled man of the world, he is in my company very retiring. In fact, I sometimes think he doesn't know how to make love at all, he seems so bashful with me.

But with Papa he is a different being, of decided manner, accurate speech and apparently tremendous capacity for work. He has contrived to get time from his military duties to assist my father's desire for obtaining Japanese railroad business, which has made Dad dote upon him.

Calling the next day after my geisha night, Captain Okashi Sendai has made Tokyo seem a fairy land to me, arranging little parties for excursions under the cherry trees in Uyeno Park, and the inspection of the curious Asakusa temple with its Coney Island attachments, just outside its walls. Through his benign influences, I have entered the social life

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of the Court Circle. He obtained for me and Dad invitations to the beautiful afternoon fete given by Prince Mito in his marvelous garden. Under its flower trees are in miniature scenes of the Heroic age of Japanese art and literature.

Though always accompanied by a party, I have made many excursions with him.

In fact, his devotion has become quite the gossip in both European and Japanese circles, for Captain Prince Sendai is a very noted nobleman.

Schevitch and Miss Pinkie Caldwell are often of these parties, the Baron and the Prince seeming to be pleasantly friendly, notwithstanding national animosity. Only once has Russian steel brought fire from Japanese flint.

We had returned from a jaunt to the big parade ground where we had seen a portion of the Japanese Guard drilling. Miss Caldwell, Count de Sansey of the French legation and Tommy Peters of the Standard Oil business were in the party. As we sat in my parlor, I had spoken enthusiastically of the superb smartness of the Guard maneuvers.

"Oh, they're good enough," replied Sendai, who like most of the higher class Japanese pretends to be modest in regard to his own country, "but you should

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see our artillery. We are a mathematical nation and science to-day produces accurate gun-fire."

"*Mon Dieu,* but the Russian cavalry!" observes De Sansey, who being French is a Muscovite adorer.

"Yes, by Saint Constantine, you should see the charge of the Cossacks of the Imperial Guard at the St. Petersburg reviews, Captain Sendai!" remarks Schevitch enthusiastically. "They're not like your little Japanese troopers, mounted on ponies."

"I expect to!" observes Sendai, languidly knocking the ashes from his cigar; he having courteously asked my permission, though everybody smokes everywhere in Japan.

"When?" asks the Russian laughingly.

"When the Japanese artillery opens upon them!" replies the Captain, a curious flash lighting up his dark eyes.

"Ah, that is the talk of excitement," replies Schevitch. "Japan will never venture to oppose us with arms in the East."

"That's what we wish you Russians to think. A rat-catching cat hides its claws," observed Sendai, quite seriously. Then apparently controlling himself, he half laughs: "I presume you're right, Baron. The reports I have heard of the Russian Imperial Guard at St. Petersburg indicate that their display

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must be tremendous and impressive. But to-day mediæval spectacular military pageants do not produce success on the field of battle. Victory comes from modern mathematical strategy and scientific slaughter."

"Ah, if it is mathematics against chivalry and elan," cries Schevitch ardently, looking at me, "I know on which side the ladies will bestow their guerdons."

"To the victors probably," laughs the Japanese. "The fair sex likes the winning side now as well as it did in the days of Ivanhoe. You have read Sir Walter Scott, haven't you, Miss Armstrong?"

His dark eyes as they gaze into mine seem to plead for my favor. So I indulge Sendai with a return glance or two that cause the Russian Baron's moustache to twitch uneasily, and remark airily: "The American fair sex adores the fellow who gets there."

Fortunately about this time Papa comes into my parlor with a bundle of business correspondence and after greeting the rest of the company, says: "Sendai, I want to see you about those bridge contracts on the Hokodate branch line. Taking your advice, I have been estimating for them. Come into my room with me. Light another cigar and we'll go over them together, my boy."

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I shall not forget the sickly look the Baron gave me at this familiarity of father's to the Captain. I presume in his foreign fashion Schevitch thinks it indicates coming nuptials and that there will be soon an American-Japanese Princess.

Miss Pinkie also emits a suggestive giggle, noting Papa's familiarity to the dandy engineer officer, who, I am pretty sure, is cultivating my father on my account.

After the others have taken their leave and gone away, Papa brings the Captain back with him, and the Prince "honors himself" as he expresses it, by dining with us European style and making my evening a very pleasant one. He has traveled the world over; and learning I having been to Paris he tells me some curious anecdotes of his Parisian experience when he was examining French automobiles to see if they could be made of practical use in the Japanese Army.

Though we're *en tête-à-tête,* he doesn't make love to me American fashion; but sits at a little distance and devours me with his dark eyes. Japs never kiss, but perhaps Sendai's bashful lack of propinquity is because Dad will wander in upon us every now and then from his room, to ask some technical questions regarding Japanese railroads.

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To aid his explanations to my father, the Prince, with Papa's permission, inspects a portfolio of the specifications and drawings of the bridges the Meriden company has erected in Manchuria for the Russian government. It is quite a habit of his during his technical conversations with Papa.

During this I note that his cuff is drawn up, displaying a small tattooed compass in red ink just above his wrist. In answer to the inquiry of my glance, Okashi says casually: "A souvenir of boyish foolishness when I, a lad of thirteen, spent a year on an English training ship, thinking I might 'bear up' as you call it, for the Japanese Navy."

After he has taken his leave with many bows and polite speeches, Dad, looking after him, remarks to me: "That dapper little engineer officer, who is trotting about after you, Hilda, has been a perfect godsend of a business find to me!"

"He has been a godsend of a social find to me," I laugh. "Through his influence, here's an invitation to the Marquis Oyama's ball."

"Has he? Well, he has been so powerful useful to me that I don't think it will be necessary for us to stay here more than a week or two longer."

"You—you are going to take me away—away from Tokyo?" I ejaculate in disconcerted tone.

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"Why certainly. The Russian government is pushing me on our Manchurian railroad work and I've got to hustle that up. Besides, Captain Sendai has fixed it so I have secured a lot of contracts up in Yezo, kindly making some of the calculations on their specifications for me himself. That Japanese beau of yours is the very finest mechanical mathematician I ever ran across. He did the calculations for the bridge trusses in about half the time Colvil Jenkins, C. E., who was Senior Wrangler at Cambridge, took for the same proposition a year ago in Niuchwang. And it is a tough one, mathematicals say. Sendai is a hummer at calculus and equations, haven't you discovered that?"

"Indeed, Papa," I laugh, "Captain Sendai and I don't discuss mathematics or engineering."

"No, reckon there are other subjects," mutters Dad, and looks rather searchingly at me.

He doesn't bring a blush to my face. I like the admiration of Captain Sendai, because it makes the Baron very gloomy and drives Pinkie Caldwell into fits of rage. Besides, Sendai is a Prince. Not that I depend upon Prince Sendai altogether for amusement in Tokyo. I find little Count de Sansey of the French Embassy, Billy Magoun, the English banker, and Tommy Peters, who represents Standard Oil in

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the Eastern world, are all anxious to bow down to me and do my bidding.

Miss Caldwell has hinted somewhat maliciously that it is because they have discovered that Peter Milliken Armstrong has accumulated several millions of Yankee dollars in his Connecticut bridge-building business. But Pinkie has become morbid ever since Charlie Brown has left her side and got to running after me.

When Charlie came down from the tea-house on the night of the river fete and saw me in geisha costume, I think that settled Mr. Brown. I wonder why I look so skittish in a *kimono*. My Chinese maid, San Shoo, says its my— But that's telling!

Anyway, from that night Captain Sendai has been quite a steady visitor at the Hotel Imperial. He has not only devoted himself to me, but has ingratiated himself with my father, always laughing at Dad's stories with consummate politeness, though he must have, by this time, heard the whole bunch a couple of dozen encores.

In addition, he has kindly figured for Dad on contracts for half a dozen new iron bridges that the Russians are erecting on the Manchurian roads. To assist him in this work he has carefully inspected the drawings father has of those already erected during

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the last few years. He seems never tired of looking at profiles and specifications of the big structure over the Sungari or the smaller one Dad erected on the railroad fifty odd miles north of Port Arthur. Though it is only an ordinary underfoot iron truss over two stone piers and the usual masonry abutments something in the construction seems to please his engineer's eyes and he gazes as lovingly at this last bridge as if it has been his own design, though Blowitz, the German engineer, erected it over three years ago. Sometimes I laughingly call it Sendai's Bridge.

Looking over his shoulder one day as he gazes at the pretty drawing of the bridge, I laugh: "I know that structure from start to finish."

"Yes?" Prince Sendai turns to me with considerable interest.

"Why certainly. Three years ago when they were putting up the iron work of that bridge Dad and I occupied a pretty little cottage right on the banks of the river. We lived there two months; and may go back and occupy it now when Dad rushes me to Manchuria to hurry up the railroad structures there. You see it is much pleasanter than the terrible Hotel de France at Port Arthur, or even Dalny. It has a lot of pretty trees about it, a flower and vege-

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table garden, and the cool breezes from the Yellow Sea go over it in summer, though the place is quite sheltered from winter storms. Our garden isn't a hundred feet from one of the abutments of this bridge and I used to play tag with my Chinese maid on the girders, till Dad stopped me and said I'd kill myself. I was only seventeen then."

Sendai seems quite interested in my babble.

"By the bye, those specifications of the bridge," I say to prove my assertion, "are not quite O. K."

"No?"

"No; they changed the caisson foundations of the piers to pile ones. The Russians were in such a hurry to get the structure completed and the road opened to Port Arthur."

"The river, I believe," remarks Sendai, "is quite a deep and rapid one."

"Oh yes," I reply, "that's the reason we are going to do some more work upon the bridge. The trusses are to be additionally strengthened."

"If a winter flood swept it away, it could not be replaced for a number of months, I imagine," observes the Captain almost contemplatively.

"You've guessed it," I say. "Port Arthur and Dalny would be in a pretty bad fix without it. They'd have to depend for all supplies by sea."

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"Ah yes," remarks Sendai, "but I am afraid technical conversation rather wearies you." Then he suddenly turns from me, for Baron Schevitch and Miss Pinkie Caldwell have come in, and says: "I hope you enjoyed Prince Hito's garden fete, honored Miss Caldwell. Esteemed Miss Armstrong thinks it is the prettiest entertainment she has seen in Tokyo, not even omitting the water fete during which I encountered two such extraordinarily pretty geishas. By the Moon Goddess, I shall never forget them! By the bye, I have just been inviting our benign hostess to form a party for a real geisha fete, one I shall give for her at some tea-house. For the instruction of you young ladies," the wretch grins, "shall be performed the 'Fan,' the 'Mapleleaf' and the *'No'* dances, by real geishas in true *Dai Nippon* style, after a dinner of tiny smoked trout, young sardines and white bait, which I assure you are just as fine as those you may have tasted at 'The Star and Garter,' Richmond, by the banks of the Thames." With this, the Prince runs off into a list of social gaieties that he proposes to tender to me, for curiously, when Schevitch and other people are in our rooms, Sendai forgets science for passion and devotes himself entirely to my behests and pleasure. Sometimes I fear he is jealous of Serge Schevitch, and the rea-

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son for his peculiar conduct is that he doesn't want the blond Russian to get a word with me.

And all this time I am being gradually impressed with the grandeur of the Sendai family. What girl could help it? The other day, as we strolled in company with Madame de Comoron, along the Sakaurada Avenue, and the Prince showed me the old palace of his house, that is now occupied as one of the buildings of the War Department, how everybody, as they passed, all bowed down and hissed their reverence at him, Japanese style. The people do not forget how these great *Daimio* families have surrendered for the national weal, the power of life, death and dominion over whole principalities, and even their Tokyo palaces, so that Japan, from being a feudal hermit nation, could become a great power of the modern world.

During these weeks I see Kamu Kiguro quite frequently. There is apparently no Japanese honeymoon, certainly there has been no wedding tour.

Chancing to be at the Kabukiza the other day with a theatre party, between the acts Captain Sendai said to one of the refreshment boys: "Skip behind the curtain and tell the ghost I want him!"

And Kiguro coming out before us made up to represent the Prince, I see the wondrous likeness into

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which the actor had transformed himself. He is a living image of his lord, as in his old time robes he bows and says: "A thousand blessings on my *Daimio* for having made his retainer happy in the love of One Thousand Joys."

"You found her without much trouble that night at the tea-house?" I ask laughingly.

"Yes, Satuneza had paid his wager straight enough. One Thousand Joys has now settled down to housework and has made me wonder how I so long deferred the pleasures of having my cooking done for me," replies the actor. "One Thousand Joys is delighted that she has no mother-in-law to rule her and all goes well in the little house in the Shiba Ku. I have a fire insurance on it. Some day we may be blessed with a fire. Then I shall give a banquet.* But with your permission, honored lord, may I make my humble bow? I now go to become The Cherry Blossom in the little comedy."

Soon after I discover that Kiguro has struck up an acquaintance with Ah Tow, Dad's Chinese valet, a fellow Papa picked up in Manchuria four years ago and who is now as devoted to him as his wife, my Chinese

* The houses are so easily erected that a well insured fire is considered a fortunate matter in Tokyo. The owner of the conflagration quite often gives an entertainment to celebrate the happy event.—EDITOR.

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maid, San Shoo, is to me. She came into my service about the same time. I, being motherless, have spent the last four years by Papa's side and have therefore been a good deal in Manchuria.

Ah Tow informs me that the actor can play fantan like a Chinese expert, chatter Mongolian dialect like a native; also that Kiguro's "boss," Captain Sendai, addresses him in very fair Manchurian, giving him many little presents, which I presume are to make the Chinese servitor his friend. The Prince seems to have endeared himself to all our following by his polite ways and more than liberal hand, which is unusual to the Japanese, who, Papa says, are somewhat in money matters like New Englanders, pinching a contract to the last yen and determined to get the value of their money. "There will be no working in uninspected girders on the Japanese railroads as we have sometimes done on the Russians," Dad remarks gloomily.

So the time runs along and our departure from Tokyo is hastened by letters Papa receives from Niuchwang and Mukden, which make his brows contract. "I think we will have to be getting a move on, Hilda," he says. "I must hustle to Manchuria and fix up my business with the Czar right smart."

"Why?" I ask.

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"Oh, so as to have everything shipshape if there comes an armed clash between our friends here and the Russians."

"Shucks!" I remark flippantly. "The Baron says the Japs will never dare. Though, of course, I know every time I see Schevitch in the streets, that the natives of this polite nation politely hate the Muscovites. The common people look two swords at him, and even the better classes give him the evil eye. But officially everything is very pleasant, and I am told the Mikado bows more affably to the representative of the Czar than he does to any other foreign ambassador."

"Humph!" grunts my father, "then the fracas may be closer than I expected. So you had better get to packing your duds and gripsacks, daughter."

And now it is the very day before our leaving Tokyo and the Prince has not yet spoken, though his dark eyes, almost Grecian nose and mathematical lips at times seem sentimentally inclined. I hope he won't speak. I don't want to make him unhappy.

Still my last day in Tokyo is made memorable by two peculiar interviews.

Early in the morning before the time of performance in the theatre, San Shoo, my maid, comes into my bedroom and says that Kiguro, the great actor,

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humbly begs the moon-eyed daughter of the West for an audience. Kiguro has just made a dramatic hit.

"Tell Kiguro, the great actor, that this moon-eyed daughter of the West grants him his humble petition and ask him to take off his clogs and come up into my parlor," I reply affably. Though I am only in my *kimono,* I step rapidly into my parlor.

Two minutes later the Japanese Thespian stands before me and bows humbly to the floor with much polite hissing of the breath. My kimono costume seems to please his national vanity. To me he says gloomily in his grandiloquent stage voice: "Maiden of the white arms, I have noticed that my lord, the *Daimio,* is growing moody. He drinks his *saké* too slowly to please me. The best brand of cigars tastes badly to him—he seems to have some weighty matter upon his august mind. Is it because of the evil-eyed Russian who follows thee like a Yezo bear seeking honey? If it is, I will perform a sword feat upon him that shall make his bowels cumber the rice-field."

"Merciful heavens!" I whisper aghast. "Would you, at the height of your grand triumph, commit a deed for which they would execute you?"

"My forefathers have died before for the Sendai. I am a *samurai* and my lord's enemy is my enemy.

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Besides, from my rank, I have the right to *hari kiri* should I wish."

To this I exclaim in horrified tone: "No, no; for Heaven's sake, don't think the Russian has anything to do with your lord's having a bitter taste in his mouth when he smokes."

"Ah, then the Russian is nothing in your eyes?"

"Nothing," I cry eagerly. "Baron Schevitch is no more to me than the beasts of the field."

Here Kiguro makes me blush to the roots of my hair by saying complaisantly: "Of course not. Now that you are my lord's, you can be no other man's."

It's lucky Dad doesn't hear the actor or he would kick Kiguro out, though perhaps he couldn't, as the Japanese Thespian has the agility of a tiger.

Before I can recover myself he continues earnestly: "Then since it is not the Muscovite, is it thy departure from the Land of the Rising Sun that makes my master think his tea bitter? You, of course, go with Prince Sendai's august permission?"

"He's—he's not objected to my going!" I answer with a nervous giggle.

"Ah, then all is well," asserts the Japanese actor. "No woman could fail to give consideration to my noble master's passion." Oh, the reverent adoration in Kiguro's speaking eyes! "Remember that the god-

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dess of love decreed thy fate when the august Sendai won you as you knelt upon the mat that evening. It is your fate to be his. Be worthy to be submissive to him and look for his coming step as you do for the joys of the sunrise. Make him always thy *Izanagi*—thy Gods of Gods! We are both slaves to our lord. *Sayonara.*" The look of mediæval submission and admiration for his *Daimio* in the actor's face half frightens me. Good Heavens, what wild thing might he not do to me if he thought Prince Sendai's heart were broken by me!

I am so much overcome with this view of the matter that I greet Kiguro's parting salaams with a hysterical laugh, and going to my room become almost frightened at the terrific passion I must have aroused in Prince Sendai.

This makes me so embarrassed in my greeting of the Prince that from it he perhaps draws hope when he calls to bid me adieu on the evening of my departure. At all events, I know that his passion has become so fervid that he is unable to control it. Perhaps it is because the summer heat permits me to wear a most ethereal Parisian evening gown, that San Shoo, my maid, says is more "catchy-catchy" than "Jap-*kimono!*"

Dad is in his room, aided by Ah Tow, packing his

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papers and trunks. San Shoo is doing the same for me in my chamber. The Prince and I are *en tête-à-tête* in my parlor at the Hotel Imperial. The evening is moonlight; the hour is romantic; Captain Sendai's dark eyes seem very sad as they look upon me. "To-morrow you will be far away from here, honored Miss Armstrong," he says as he bows before me.

"Yes," I whisper, "far away." I had intended to say "from you," but I pity the poor fellow's unhappy love for me and only suggest that by a sentimental glance. Then to relieve the strain of the situation, I run on in laughing pertness: "And I hope you will be a good boy when I am away."

"I shall be very busy," he observes, as at my permission he lights a cigar and sits down. "It is only the idle who can spare much time for wickedness."

He always will sit at such a respectful distance from me that it is difficult to carry on a very confidential conversation.

"Yes, but you must be busy about the right things, Okashi," I remark, moving somewhat nearer to him. I have grown into the habit of calling the Prince by his first name, though he has always addressed me in his Japanese way as "honored young lady" or "es-

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teemed Miss Armstrong" or "beneficent goddess." I like the last best. It is most romantic.

"I have heard you were the wildest kind of an undergraduate at Harvard," I resume, assuming a sisterly tone.

"Honored Miss Armstrong, youth will be young, and to be a man it is necessary to have experience in everything," he answers, deprecatingly I think.

"Oh, yes, but you must promise me that you will not play too high poker while I'm away," I observe, continuing the sisterly method of displaying interest in him.

"Oh, my stakes shall never be higher than when I won—" the prince looks at me and laughs lightly, but with a suspicion of sentiment in his tone, "the trembling young ladies kneeling on the mat."

"Oh yes, but that includes Pinkie," I giggle. "And *two* don't go in Yankeeland!" Then thinking of what I have suggested, I grow red in the face as he looks at me in a contemplative yet startled way, and replies: "Believe me, I know enough of American customs not to attempt to build a bridge in the clouds!"

"But you must promise me," I ejaculate, trying to cover embarrassment by flippancy, "not to gamble for any other geishas, or I shall have a lecture to read to you when I return from Manchuria."

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"Oh," he laughs, "quarrels only come with the absence of the red petticoat." The color of my countenance is now crimson. "The red petticoat" in Japan is doffed before marriage.

But Sendai, probably noticing my blushes, remarks lightly: "If I promise to be a good boy in Tokyo, you must promise to write me long gossipy letters from Manchuria."

"Indeed I will," I answer, "I know everyone in Port Arthur from Alexeieff, the Russian Viceroy, and Admiral Stark, the commander of the fleet, to the landlord of the dirty Hotel de France."

"Thank you, I shall always be interested in what you are doing," he says gratefully and earnestly; adding: "Esteemed young lady, were I you, I would not permit too marked attentions from Baron Schevitch."

"Why, the Baron will not be in Manchuria."

"Oh, I think he will," observes the Prince, contemplatively knocking the ashes from his cigar, "quite shortly after you arrive there. It is not often that I make remarks about men behind their backs, but the Baron's profession is not as aristocratic as at present you think it, honored Miss Armstrong."

"What do you mean?" I ask, opening my eyes.

"Oh, well, to be very candid with you, I mean the Baron is an agent of the Czar to discover things which

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his embassy would consider beneath diplomatic attention. He is simply a paid spy of the Russian government."

"Good heavens!" I falter as into my mind flies: "Oh, how jealous Sendai must be to say such things of his rival!"

"I can repeat this to my father?" I remark rather haughtily.

"Why certainly; in fact, you had better give your father a hint; that is, if Papa wishes to get extremely good prices from the Russian government on any more bridge contracts," laughs the engineer officer. Then he abruptly changes the subject and says: "An important order from the Chief of Staff will not permit my going to-morrow morning to Yokohama to see you on board the *Nagasaki Maru,* but you will find, honored young lady, that I am represented by a token."

Just then, Dad in his careless, interrupting way comes in and cries: "What is that I hear, my boy—that you won't be able to see us off at Yokohama?"

"No, honored Mr. Armstrong. Some news that has arrived this evening has given me immediate and imperative duties to perform, and consequently I am compelled to say *sayonara* this evening both to you and your fair daughter." Sendai bows to the floor

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before me. Then looking into my eyes, a strange light enters his as he says: "May we meet again?"

"We *will* meet again!" I reply. "Papa early in the spring is bringing me back to Tokyo on our way to the United States. Besides—"

"I may come to Manchuria; who knows?" remarks the Prince contemplatively.

"Oh, you think you will visit us in Manchuria?" I reply effusively.

"Perhaps. Even a fortune teller cannot foretell his own fate," observes the Captain.

Then Papa shakes hands with him in American fashion and says: "Thank you for everything you have done for me in a business way and in a social way for my daughter," and walks out.

Sendai looking at me, remarks sentimentally: "Please don't forget my words in regard to the Baron, esteemed Miss Armstrong."

"I will remember," I whisper.

"There, good-bye now!" He uses the English form of address. Apparently passion makes him ignore Japanese etiquette; he takes my hand, kisses it in the European way and whispers: "Don't forget your letters! Tell me everything that is going on about

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you—write me the details of life in Port Arthur!" Bowing once more, he passes from my sight.

There are tears in my eyes as I watch the poor fellow depart—a woman is always tender to a hopeless passion. Suddenly I wonder if Sendai thinks my promise to write to him means a Japanese engagement.

The next morning we glide down to Yokohama on the train and go on board the *Nagasaki Maru* bound for Chemulpo and Niuchwang. From the latter port we will take train to Port Arthur and Dalny.

Schevitch, Pinkie Caldwell and Charlie Brown have come on board to bid us good-bye, and the Baron whispers to me: "It is only *au revoir,* Mademoiselle Armstrong, I shall be in Manchuria within the month."

As I step into my cabin, I give an exclamation of delight; it has been made a floral bower by Prince Sendai. On its table is a case. I open it and find a wondrous piece of that magnificent cloisonné work that, made by the old artificers of Japan, is now almost priceless. With it is a note.

"Esteemed Young Lady:—

This bauble has been in the Sendai family for many hundred years. Keep it as a slight sou-

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venir of some happy Tokyo days. Pardon the extreme effrontery of my venturing to address you.

Rejoicing that your honored health is not subject to sea-sickness,

I remain your most humble,

SENDAI."

As I return to the deck, impressed by the magnificence of the Prince's gift, I remember the Prince's warning. "Oh, he must consider my promised letters to him a Japanese engagement!" I think. "Yes, his warning of Baron Schevitch indicated that he thought he had the right to advise me."

Papa is waiting for me on the deck, a big cigar in his mouth. "These Havanas Sendai sent me are as bang up as his mathematics," says Dad. "I suppose they are in return for the diamond ring I gave him. It was a sparkler!"

As the vessel leaves the harbor and turns its prow southeast towards the Inland Sea, I, pacing the deck with my father, remember that Sendai predicted the Baron would come to Manchuria. Is Schevitch following *me?*

But my reflections are broken in upon by Papa remarking in very serious tones and in rather low whisper so that we cannot be overheard: "My daugh-

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ter, I'm almighty glad you didn't fall in love with the Jap Prince."

"Why so, Papa?"

"Because American women had better marry their own countrymen, and he's the kind of a chap who is very likely to be killed in the coming war. That engineer officer would put his head into an exploding Russian cannon if he thought it would do the Mikado any good; though he'd be cool enough to calculate range equations under fire."

"Coming war? You think it is imminent?"

"I think it is certain that the Japs will call the Muscovite bluff," whispers Dad. "That's the reason I'm getting to Manchuria in such a hurry—so as to have my business shipshape when the storm bursts!"

"Why, the Japanese will never dare to confront the mighty power of Russia!"

"Haven't you ever seen a bull terrier fly at a bull?" whispers Papa. "Besides, I think the Japs have a pretty fair chance of winning."

"Why so?" I whisper.

"Well, they've got the Jews on their side, and the Jews are a power in this world. You just go into business and see. The Mikado'll get loans slick as grease when he wants them from the Hebrew bankers of the whole world."

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EPISODE THE SECOND.

MY MANCHURIAN HOUSE-PARTY.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CURIOUS ASPARAGUS TRENCH.

"Dad, I am going to have a house-party up at Polandien!"

"Well, I'm darned!" ejaculates Father, leaning down to me to catch my words over the roar of shells falling into the fortifications and docks of Port Arthur. Then gazing at the throng of refugees that are crowding into the train, he adds grimly: "Your invites will be accepted. Just at present, any spot on God's earth is preferable to this one!"

For the blow has come! The little David, Japan, has struck the big Goliath, Russia, right in the eye with his slingshot—I mean his torpedoes.

This torpedo business happened only a few evenings ago when I was at Madame Stark's fete in celebration of her husband's saint's day. Stark commands the Russian fleet at Port Arthur; consequently, many

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naval officers were on shore that evening drinking the health of their hospitable hostess.

We heard the explosions during the revelry and thought it was torpedo practice by the Russian boats. It was an hour after that we learned three big war vessels had been torpedoed and put out of combat by the sudden assault of the Japanese flotilla.

Next morning I went up one of the big hills that overlooks The Tiger's Tail and saw the *Retvizan* beached, the *Palladia* on shore and the *Tzarevitch* disabled in the inner harbor.

Words could not describe the savage rage and yet extreme astonishment of the Russian officers at this audacious and unexpected onslaught of what they think their pigmy foe. Most of them never expected Japan would dare. Though Papa has been looking forward to something of the kind for months, I am certain, by his rapid and energetic business preparations and the manner in which he has hurried the work of the Meriden Company on the bridges he was under contract in Manchuria and collected as much as he could get out of the Russian Vice-regal exchequer.

Then came the bombardment, and Dad immediately announced to me that he would take me up to our little godown, near Polandien. "There you will be safe, Hilda," he said, "and can get your duds together,

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remaining comfortably there while I close up my business in Manchuria as quickly as possible. This country will soon be over-run by contesting armies."

Therefore on this bright February day, we, attended by Ah Tow and San Shoo, carrying our portable luggage, are getting hastily on board the train which is standing in the little station on the water-front of the town. Our passports have been carefully examined and visèd by the Russian officials and I watch with some interest the great care that is now taken in examining these documents that our fellow-travelers are compelled to present before going on the train. Especially do the Czar's policemen look with wary eye upon the papers of the Chinese coolies and house servants, who are as anxious as we are to escape from the Japanese bombardment. Even the description on Ah Tow's passport, though he has been well known in the place as father's valet for several years—and Dad is quite *persona grata* with the Russian officials—is so carefully compared with Tow's personal appearance by two Tartar officials, that our Chinese servitor grows rather pallid under the inspection and examination.

As they pronounce him all right, Ah Tow says more confidently to father: "Russian man tink Chinee man may be Japanee man. No can tell diffelence,

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sabe! Japanee man put on tail and talkee Chinee lingo, then all samee Chinee man."

And San Shoo whispers to me: "Missie, Russian man belly scared of Japanee man now slince they blow 'em up."

"Stop your Chinese jabber!" commands Papa savagely to our attendants, "and hustle those things aboard the train."

This is very shortly done and we follow our impedimenta quite hurriedly, for a big shell from some Japanese war vessel has burst in the Eastern basin not half a mile from us.

We have hardly squeezed on board the crowded car before the engineer, who seems to be in a hurry, gives two sharp whistles from one of the American locomotives that Papa has furnished to the Manchurian railway, and our train, following the little river, climbs the steep gradient that leads us from the land-locked port up to the higher hilly plateau of the peninsula. Here we turn to the north and dart off upon the long line of rails that lead to Niuchwang or to more distant Harbin and the Trans-Siberian railway that would take one to Russia itself.

As the noise of the bombardment diminishes gradually in the distance, the conversation in the first-class car in which we are seated commences to be more

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audible. This is a polyglot of half a dozen different languages, from German, French, English, Russian and Tartar merchants, with a little Mandarin Chinese thrown in from a Taotai of some North Manchurian town addressed to his accompanying secretaries, whose excited jabber shows that they are very anxious to leave the vicinity of shot and shell.

An hour after we are at Dalny Junction. Here our already overcrowded train receives more passengers from the seaport that Russia intends to make the terminal of its Asiatic railroads.

During this Dad, who has been apparently turning over my house-party announcement in his mind, says to me: "That's not a bad idea of yours, Hilda, to have company up at our godown, for I've got to go almost immediately up to Harbin to collect what money I can from the Vice-regal treasury before our exodus. Whom have you invited? Are any of them on the train with us?"

"No," I reply. "My idea came to me in a hurry. I only had time to ask Madame Sophie Klinkofstrom. I took pity on her. You know how she dreads the shells, and her brother, the Russian inspector of the port, cannot leave. With her will come Olga Petrofsky, the pretty sister of the Russian Captain who commands at Polandien, and Johnny Bristow, the

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agent of the big Rhode Island cotton mills, who says he has to go back to Dalny again on Monday to clear up two or three transactions and deals before he lights out to Niuchwang."

"Anyone else?"

"No," I reply. "That's all we can entertain comfortably."

"Humph, I'm glad you didn't ask that Baron Schevitch, who has been running after you so much."

Half an hour after the train has left the Dalny Junction I look out towards the north. The railway runs generally along a high escarpment. On my left is Kin Chow bay; between us and the water is the line of telegraph poles; an occasional culvert of masonry or short bridge across some little stream are the only variations in the road bed. Upon my right the barren hills have but little timber upon them, only occasional evidences of cultivation and considerable snow.

Crossing a narrow neck of land we reach Kin-chow, and passing further inland, the peninsula broadens and we lose our view of the water. Two hours after leaving Dalny we reach the little valley where our godown is nestled on the hillside beside the swiftly running river, which is swollen with snow water. It is the largest stream crossing the railroad between Haicheng and Port Arthur.

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We rattle over the bridge, stop at the little railroad station and five minutes after, to the astonishment of the two Chinese servants we have left in charge, we make our unexpected appearance at the godown—which is wooden, of one story, rambling but homelike. It consists of parlor and dining room, separated by a wide hall; beyond this is a big wing, in which are situated my bedroom and Dad's; another ell at the other end of the house contains more bedrooms, while a rambling attachment to the dining room is composed of a butler's pantry, kitchens, offices and servants' rooms. We had spent the autumn months here and soon feel quite at home in our old resting-place. Superintended by Ah Tow, the Chinese boys rush about and we have an early and pleasant dinner.

"By the bye," Dad says as he smokes his cigar after the meal, "what are you going to give your house-party to eat?"

"Canned goods!" I answer sententiously. "We have plenty of them here—canned chicken and canned turkey, *pate-de-foiegras* and French peas, American canned corn and asparagus, canned salmon from Oregon and—plenty of champagne! Besides, our Chinese gardeners are so expert with their hotbeds that, who knows, I may be able to put before my guests some early cucumbers and salad lettuce."

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"Not for a month or two," laughs Dad, "and we will have skipped in less than a week, daughter." Taking a contemplative whiff of his cigar, he continues: "The more I think of it, the better pleased I am at your house-party, Hilda, because to-morrow I am compelled to leave you for Harbin. When I return from there you must be packed and ready, for off we go to Niuchwang and Yankeeland."

"Yes, but are you not compelled to stop on your way to San Francisco at Tokyo, on account of your Japanese contracts?" I suggest.

Papa looks at me a moment rather searchingly; then whispers cautiously, for even our Chinese servants have ears: "Any letter from your Japanese friend?"

"Not for a month," I reply, "though I wrote to the Prince three weeks ago."

"Well, don't write any more," remarks Dad in my ear. "You letters would probably be inspected by the postal authorities now."

"I think they have been before, Papa," I say.

"The dickens!"

"Yes, a curious remark from Baron Schevitch as we danced at Madame Stark's entertainment made me think that he had seen my handwriting in an envelope addressed to——"

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Papa stops my outspoken words by putting his fingers on my lips.

Taking his hint, my voice is very low as I continue: "I had suspected something of this kind before, so my last few letters were enclosed in your business correspondence to your agent in Shanghai and forwarded from that palace to Tokyo."

"All right," remarks father. "I've two or three letters now to get ready for the foreign mail. By the way, Yaling can probably obtain something fresh in the way of meat or vegetables for your house-party." He claps his hands and, Ah Tow entering, commands: "Yaling! Sabe! Heap quick!"

"Yaling? Heap quick? Me sabe!" replies his factotum and shuffles off in his noiseless, felt-padded Chinese shoes.

As he does so, Dad observes: "Reckon Yaling will fix you as to meat."

"Indeed, I know he will if any human being can," I answer confidently. Yaling is the Chinese magistrate and acts as militia officer, judge, chief of intelligence, head of the commissary department and general Pooh-Bah of the village. For the last three years if I wanted anything in the place from a horse to a watermelon, I went to Yaling and the necessary article was forthcoming.

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Then father leaves me to go to his bedroom and devote himself to his business correspondence, which he generally writes with his own hand; consequently I sit down in my pleasantly but unpretentiously furnished parlor and, having nothing better to do, gaze out at the winter prospect.

There is only a trace of snow upon the ground; the thermometer is just at freezing at night, the sun in the daytime being quite pleasantly warm, the winds from the Liao-tung Gulf being generally mild. The hills above us appear barren, though scattered among their undulations are fields that in the spring will become green with the long-stalked *gow-liang,* the Chinese giant millet, also some plantations of evergreen Manchurian larches and Siberian pines. A little thicket of these is also in the corner of our garden, which runs down to the river bank. Its fruit-trees are bare of leaves now, but the larches and evergreen pines screen the grounds from the eyes of passengers on the trains. In these under the sheltered bank of the river are the hotbeds of our Chinese gardeners, from which we have been regaled in former times by early cucumbers, celery, radishes and lettuce.

About these hotbeds, as I look dreamily out of the window, I can see a coolie working. Beyond them

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rushes the little river. I note as I gaze upon it that it is quite a deep and rapid stream now, there having been melting snows in the hills above us.

From the southern bank of the river runs the railway to Dalny and Port Arthur, the assaulted citadel of the Russians; from its northern bank, the lines of rails and telegraph wires to Mukden, Harbin, Irkutsk and St. Petersburg, five thousand miles away.

Connecting these two sections of railway is the bridge that crosses the little river with its iron girders, stone piers and masonry abutments. A big iron tank for watering locomotives is standing near its southern abutment, perched on a strong timber framing.

Over this structure, Dad has told me, must now come all the supplies, munitions of war and men to the Russian beleaguered citadel, because already Port Arthur is blockaded by the Japanese fleet.

Apparently the Russians value this bridge quite highly and are determined to protect it from any unexpected raid of the Hun-hu-tzes, or Chinese bandits, who, coincident with the Japanese attack, have become bolder and more restless and aggressive. Details from the two companies of infantry in the nearby village are stationed at each end of the bridge; be-

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sides, the usual Cossack and military police patrols have been doubled.

As I gaze out, I hear the whistle of a train which comes into sight from the north and crosses the bridge laden down with a Russian regiment to reinforce the garrison at Port Arthur, and wonder with a little laugh how the Japanese engineer officer would like the use it is being put to now. I remember how I used to call it "Sendai's Bridge," and my thoughts wander to my Tokyo suitor and the letters he had written me.

Our correspondence had proceeded quite pleasantly, averaging perhaps a letter every three weeks, during these four months, for it is now well into February. In order to avoid sentiment, for I fear the poor Prince thinks my letters mean engagement, I have tried to devote myself to the gossip of the place about me. I have written him of the various entertainments given by the Russian officials and the reviews inspected by Alexeieff, Viceroy of all the Russian East. In addition, I have not omitted one or two little entertainments given by myself, and have permitted him to know that the Americansky young lady, whose father gets so many paper roubles from the Russian government, is quite run after by the young officers of the Army and Navy in Port Arthur.

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But my accounts of Russian followers have not prevented a tinge of sentiment, carefully hidden perhaps, being in Sendai's letters to me. They have invariably commenced: "Hoping that your esteemed health is good notwithstanding the winter weather." How continually anxious the Prince is about my well being! And his epistles have always ended: "Thanking you for the kind consideration of your lines that have made the winter sun a summer sun to Sendai."

Dad has told me this is the Japanese method of polite address in letters, but I discern the hidden passion of the man. I remember Sendai's look when I left him and his strong moustache brushed my wrist. Besides, the present he gave me, I now discover, is one worthy of a princess. Such a magnificent piece of Japanese art can hardly be met with out of their national museums or Prince Mito's marvelous collection. They say it is more valuable than a big ruby.

But as I reflect upon my last letter of nearly four weeks ago to Sendai, I give a sudden start—I remember I had described the forthcoming fete of Madame Stark, the wife of the Admiral of the fleet; told him of the magnificent costume just arrived for me from Paris, and how I thought most of the naval officers would be on shore that evening to drink their officer's health, even giving him the date of the festivity. Can

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my communication have had anything to do with the time selected for the Japanese attack that night with torpedo boats? I hope not. I want to be neutral in this awful war. The Russians have been very kind to me here and I have a great many friends among them.

By this time, Dad having finished his letters, returns to me, and a minute or two after Ah Tow ushers in with many salaams, Yaling, the head Chinese official of the village.

Yaling is a dark, lithe, skinny, athletic man, like most of the Manchurian Chinese. From his close-shaven crown hangs a long black queue. Beneath his broad yellow forehead, sharp little Tartar eyes twinkle and roll about with the peculiar restless motion of a rat-catching cat.

As he bows low to me and my father, though the lamplight is not very bright in the room, these blink as if the illumination were too strong for him, and as he speaks there is a restless, nervous tone in his pidgin English that is unusual to Yaling, who generally has a placid, easy-going appearance.

"Well, old friend," says Dad pleasantly, "what can you do for us in the matter of fresh meat and vegetables?"

"Why you clum slo quick, Missie Almstlong? No

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had notiflycation!" the Chinaman answers, a disconcerted annoyance in his tone. Apparently our sudden arrival has embarrassed the village official, who has always looked very carefully after the creature comforts of the great American contractor. From his intercourse with the Yankee mechanics who have erected the bridges along the line, Yaling sometimes introduces three-syllable words that seem out of place in the usual pidgin English in which he addresses us.

"Yes," I say eagerly, "Yaling, you must get us something nice. I have friends coming."

He blinks his eyes at me again as he half stammers: "You hab fiends clum too?"

"Yes, three or four from Port Arthur," answers Dad.

"No likee Japanese cannon ball," mutters Yaling, an uncanny yet cautious merriment dancing in his Mongolian eyes.

"But the fresh meat!" ejaculates Dad, keeping to his subject.

"How can tell? Bullock all eatee by Russian officer. Hun-hu-tzes—you sabe bad men up in hills?—kill too many clows."

"But the meat!" remarks father urgently.

"You sabe sheep-meat?" mutters the Mongolian.

"Yes, get some!"

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"All lightee; little sheep meat!"

"What? Lamb!" That will be delightful!" I ejaculate.

"To-morrow morning, little sheep meat; you sabe, him clum!" and apparently not overanxious to prolong the interview, fearing perhaps that more may be demanded of him, Yaling with a low bow moves towards the door.

But I, by this success made eager for more good things for my guests, cry out to him: "Fresh vegetables! You sabe, fresh vegetables!"

Yaling looks at me helplessly, then goes to the window and points out at the snow upon the hills, shrugs his shoulders and mutters: "No can get!"

"But something," I plead; "something for salad. You sabe salad?"

"Yes; sweet and sour; no good."

I have followed Yaling to the window. Papa comes after us. Looking out on the scene on which twilight is rapidly descending, father remarks: "Don't you think you can get something from our Chinese gardener there with the hotbeds in the bottom of the garden?" adding: "He seems to be doing a good deal of work down there. Judging by the amount of dirt dug up, he's more ambitious this season that I've ever seen him before."

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At this, Yaling's eyes contract like a cat's at night, then almost close. Suddenly they open very wide as he exclaims: "You sabe sparaglass?"

"Certainly," I cry in rapture, "asparagus!"

"Sparaglass, two months! Him dig deep big sparaglass-trench; belly deep, plenty of manure, sparaglass bed good, tlee years."

"Three years! Much good that will do me," I remark dejectedly; then plead: "You must get me something—radishes."

Yaling gives a gesture of impotence; then abruptly answers: "Watercless, sabe! Him up liver; watercless!"

"Oh, watercress for salad. Thank you," I return gratefully, as Yaling, seeming to wish to close the interview, bows his way nervously to the door.

"By the bye," remarks Dad, "the new gardener you've got for me, Yaling, seems to be a hustler. As I wrote my letters, I chanced to glance out there and I never saw a coolie work so spry before."

"Yes, workem hard! Do eblyting for 'Melican fiends," grins Yaling, whose eyes seem to twinkle anxiously, probably because he thinks I will demand some other impossibility from him.

As he goes away, Dad chuckles: "No wonder he was scared. I guess Yaling feared you would be de-

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manding water and musk melons from him in February. But you'll have the little sheep meat, you can bet your bottom dollar. Yaling never broke his word to me yet."

Then this domestic complication being arranged, I try to forget the Japanese war by looking through a recent novel Dad had had forwarded from Niuchwang, and that being finished, have nothing to do but to go to bed. I pass a very comfortable night, my slumbers only being interrupted by the noise of three or four trains rushing past our grounds on the railway bound south for Port Arthur.

The next morning Papa arouses me bright and early so that I may run down with him after breakfast to the little station in the village and bid him adieu when he takes the train for Harbin.

As we descend the narrow path that leads from our grounds, he tells me that he leaves Ah Tow, his valet, to take care of me.

"Oh, Papa," I reply to this, "don't have any fear of me. The Chinese servants about the place have been in our employ for several years and there are two companies of Russian soldiers in the village to look after the Hun-hu-tzes should they come down from the hills."

"That's all right," answers Dad. "If you want

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anything out of the ordinary, call upon Yaling and he'll do everything for you. Besides," he adds, "you won't be lonely very long. The house-party will be up in the afternoon. No doubt they'll get out of Port Arthur quick enough."

"Oh, Madame Klinkofstrom and Olga spent last night at Dalny," I answer. "Sophie said she'd die if she stayed another day under the Japanese guns!"

"Yes, she's a weak little woman," remarks Papa, "not like my strong-souled daughter," and pats me reassuringly on the shoulder; for I am tearful at the thought of his leaving me.

By this time we are among the Cossack guards along the railway, and three minutes after are at the little station. Here young Captain Petrofsky in the uniform of his Siberian regiment comes up to us, and I tell him his sister is expected in the afternoon.

"It's very kind in you, Miss Armstrong, to ask my sister to visit you," he remarks. "I can probably get time to-morrow afternoon to run up and see you and her for a little while. I have been anxious about Olga, fearing that some accursed Japanese shell might injure her."

Then Petrofsky tells Papa in his affable way: "Monsieur Armstrong, I and my Russian soldiers will see no harm comes to Mademoiselle. Besides, Colonel

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Genke, the head of all our railway police, will be here to-morrow. Have no fear for your daughter. She shall be the care of Petrofsky."

This makes Dad look very comfortable as he shakes hands with the young Russian officer, takes my good-bye kiss and forces his way onto the train that, having just come up from Port Arthur and Dalny, is already crowded with non-combatant refugees.

As Papa does so, an official steps up and, though he knows my father very well, asks him for his passport and examines it.

Gazing upon the scene, I note how carefully the Russian officials are of their inspection of all outgoing travelers, especially the Chinese.

In answer to my rather inquiring glance, Petrofsky says shortly: "We fear Japanese spies, that is all. It is rumored that Japanese officers are now among the peasantry and the bandits all up the Liao-tung River inciting them to attack and destroy the railroad."

Then the young officer, after a few words of warning to the lieutenant who is with him, gallantly escorts me across the bridge and by its sentries; then up the path to the gate of our compound. Here he bids me adieu, thanking me again for inviting his sister to a place of refuge.

Then I am left alone with only my music, piano

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and two or three of the latest novels for company; but I have too much to do in preparing for my coming guests to think of them for the present.

Attended by Ah Tow, I examine the larder. Blessings on him! Yaling has kept his Chinese word. Little sheep meat is here in the form of two spring lambs. American fashion, Dad has an ice-house. This is already filled so that the lambs will keep as long as we want them. Besides, Yaling has sent me for my parlor and dining table a lot of those bulb daisies and tulips that the Chinese raise winter or summer. The watercresses are also at my hand.

Preparing for my house-party, I am busy all of the forenoon and some of the afternoon. During my peregrinations about the house, Ah Tow, who has become my shadow, startles me by some additional war news.

Coming closely to me, he rubs his hands together and a benign smile lights up his Mongolian countenance, though there is a malicious sparkle in his almond eyes as he whispers: "Jappies give 'em to Russies—in le neck—woncie more! Two times!"

"What!" I gasp, and stare at him astonished as he in his Chinese lingo tells me under his breath the first news of the destruction of the *Variag* and an-

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other Russian gunboat at Chemulpo, over three hundred miles away.

How Ah Tow has heard it I cannot guess, but in some mysterious manner news appears to pass about among the Chinese population with tremendous rapidity all over Manchuria, and at every blow Japan strikes, the eyes of the Mongolian population seem to grow brighter and their smiles more placidly benign. Gracious, how they all hate the Russians! Is it because, three years ago, Muscovite soldiers, under the Boxer plea, butchered and massacred them like sheep all up and down the Liao River valley, or is it because of Alexeieff's proclamation, just issued, that decrees that whenever a Russian party is attacked by bandits, the nearest village shall be destroyed unless its inhabitants attack and deliver over to them the Hun-hu-tzes that are now scrambling all over this country?

Though Dad has told me there is some reason in the edict, as a flying bandit will plunge into a field of the long-stalked millet and throwing away his arms, come out on the other side as innocent a Chinese coolie as ever wore a pigtail.

Anyway, the native population of Manchuria hate the Russians and will do anything to aid the Japanese.

My preparations for my guests being completed,

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after a solitary lunch, during which I sigh for masculine company, I dawdle away the rest of the day by singing a little, playing a little and reading a few chapters of a new novel, though the noises coming into my windows tell me how busy the war has made the railroad. Where there had been four trains, a dozen now rattle across the bridge and roll towards the south laden with soldiers, war materials and provisions. Those returning northward are empty of goods, but are full of people escaping from the horrors of the Port Arthur bombardment.

Finally, the sun beginning to sink in the west, I look at my watch and discover that the train bearing my expected guests will, in all probability, soon arrive at the little station. It occurs to me I will go to meet them.

To do this, I have to pass through our garden, which in the summertime was made pretty by flowers, blossoms of fruit trees and the green of its vegetable patches, but is now bare and leafless except the clump of evergreens near the river.

I am soon at the little gate that leads out upon the railway track by the side of the huge water-tank that adjoins the big masonry abutment of the bridge; near this is stationed a squad of infantry. As the sergeant in charge respectfully salutes me, I chance to

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glance down towards the bank of the river where, sheltered by the evergreens from railroad observation, my Chinese gardener is at work upon the hotbeds and asparagus trench.

"Mercy!" I mentally exclaim, "what a pile of manure he has accumulated! He is going to make a very big asparagus bed. Does he think we'll start a cannery?"

Then not caring to loiter about the station, with its dirty coolies, prying military police and Cossack patrols, I think I will kill time until I hear the whistle of the train by a look at my hotbeds.

As I reach the spot, screened by the evergreens from the railroad track, and stand beside my hotbeds, I see to my rage, that no early vegetables have been planted under their glass frames. Apparently, the asparagus trench has received our gardener's entire attention. This is indicated by the enormous pile of manure he has collected to fill it, though the trench itself doesn't seem so extraordinarily long or remarkably deep.

Waiting for the train, I seat myself on a drift log by the bank of the cool flowing river and quite close to the manure pile. After I have carelessly thrown a pebble or two into the swift running water, I listlessly prod with my parasol the big dungheap and am astonished to discover it is only a large mound of freshly

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excavated mould carefully protected from frost by a covering of warm fertilizer. What wondrous care these Chinese gardeners take to keep the earth moist and prevent its freezing before they replace it in the trench.

I am about to turn away, trip up the little path and depart for the station to meet my friends, for I now hear the distant whistle of the train. But at this moment I chance to catch sight of our gardener working quietly, but rapidly, with a pick at the extreme end of the trench nearest the railway. As the left arm of the Chinese coolie covered with dirt comes into the rays of the setting sun, I see upon it near the wrist a pocket compass tattooed in red ink. Tattoo marks on coolie skins are not at all uncommon, though they are generally representations of dragons, birds and other Chinese fetiches. But this compass seems to remind me of something I have seen before, though for the moment I cannot remember it.

Stepping to the end of the trench, which, screened by the thick foliage of the larches and evergreen pines, is quite close to the railway bridge abutment, I demand in English: "You, man with the red compass, haven't I seen you before?"

For a moment the stooping figure appears to rise to answer me. Then it doggedly continues its work.

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"Hi, down there!" I call, "you coolie!" and the working figure paying no attention to me, I cry imperiously: "You, I mean!" for I am accustomed to be obeyed by my Chinese servants, "here, jump out of that ditch and tell me why you've not planted my hotbeds! I am sure you sabe English!" And he not answering me, I reach down indignant at the insolence of the Chinaman, for these coolies are usually obsequious, and grabbing the creature by his pigtail, yank it with all my might to compel his attention.

I stagger back with a short, astonished cry, for the long Chinese queue under my vigorous pluck has come off in my hand. Then the coolie's face is upturned to mine and looks me straight in the eyes. His glance, at first agonized and appealing, suddenly becomes appalling in imperious command.

Gazing at him, I nearly faint. For minus its disguising pigtail, though begrimed with dirt and covered with the sweat of toil, I recognize the face of—Prince Okashi Sendai!

Then he places warning finger to his lips, and unheeding the questioning of my eyes, becomes once more the Chinese coolie slaving in the asparagus trench.

Fortunately in my astonishment I have dropped the queue back into the ditch, for before I can address

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him and ask the meaning of his astounding presence in Manchuria, I hear the gate of the garden open and see my house-party headed by Sophie Klinkofstrom coming into the compound. By her side, to my astonishment and dismay, strolls Baron Serge Schevitch. Fortunately he stops to brush the mud off his boots before he approaches me.

During these short moments, the awful truth flashes in my brain; "Prince Sendai has journeyed to Manchuria for love of me. There can be no other reason. In order to meet me, he has naturally come to our bungalow. And now, cut off by the sudden outbreak of the war, the poor fellow for his own safety has been compelled to assume the disguise of a Chinese coolie.

"What will men not do for love!"

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CHAPTER V.

YALING, THE CHINESE MAGISTRATE.

As this darts through my mind, I run hastily up the garden path to prevent my guests coming down to the asparagus trench. I remember the words of Sendai to me in Tokyo in regard to the Baron's occupation and a little tremor runs through my limbs as I internally shudder: "If the Russians catch Sendai here, they will execute him as a spy. My God! Fancy a prince condemned to ignoble death simply because he loves me too well to remain from my side!"

With quick steps, I contrive to meet my party close to the gate; and greeting them with considerable *savoir faire,* listen to Sophie Klinkofstrom's tale of woe about the Japanese bombardment, and pretty Olga Petrofsky's anxious inquiries as to her brother, the Captain.

As we walk up to the house, Johnny Bristow tells me a story of an exploding Japanese shell in the big pile of vodka cases stored on the Port Arthur quay. "One of the Jap's shells busted in the pile and set it

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on fire," he remarks. "You never saw men work harder than the dockhands did to put it out and save their tipple!"

"Why, I thought vodka was liquid fire without exploding Japanese shells," I giggle, attempting to conceal agitation by merriment.

As we reach the front door of our house, Baron Schevitch bows to me and says, a tinge of apology in his tone: "Here I must take my leave. Madame Klinkofstrom was so frightened at the thought of Chinese bandits on the railroad that I offered her my escort. I presume I shall be able to find some kind of accommodation in the village."

"My brother's duties as collector of the port, of course, prevented his coming. I didn't dare to journey alone, and the Baron at my entreaty volunteered." Sophie looks at me, a sentimental appeal in her blue eyes. She is a widow, fair, svelte and twenty-six, and very much smitten with her escort's blond beauty.

Thus compelled, I proffer a reluctant hospitality, and say: "Baron Schevitch, I think I can give you a bed here if Mr. Bristow does not mind occupying the same room with you."

"Oh, I couldn't condemn any man to the fleas and discomfort he'll get down in that hole there," says

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Johnny, affably nodding his head towards the village.

"Then, by my patron saint, I am saved from the vermin of a Cossack's tent or a Mogul hut!" remarks the Baron enthusiastically.

All this time I shiver as I think of the danger that Schevitch's presence may bring to poor Prince Sendai slaving in the garden, though I fear to close my doors to a man I imagine is the private agent of the Russian government, dreading he may think I have some reason for not wishing his presence.

Actuated by this emotion, I throw an extreme and effusive cordiality into my voice and manner as I say: "I am delighted that you came. Had I thought that you could leave Port Arthur, I would have invited you myself and brought you with me yesterday, my dear Baron."

"Ah, then we could have had a pleasant day together," remarks Serge. "Mr. Armstrong went to Harbin this morning, did he not, Mademoiselle Hilda?" Schevitch seems to know a good deal of our family affairs.

"Yes, we could have had a pleasant day alone together," I reply, throwing considerable intention into my voice, and coquetry into my eyes.

This causes Madame Klinkofstrom to glance at me suspiciously and not over affably. The fair Sophie

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has at times suspected that Serge's affections would run my way if I would but permit him; despite her Scandinavian origin and yellow hair and blue eyes, she can be intensely jealous. God save me from the jealousy of a blonde! A brunette's passion may be more fervid, but for quiet suspicion, continuous intriguing and amorous plotting, the soft, blue-eyed, languishing blonde will take the prize from dashing Miss Blackeyes every time.

In contrast to Madame Klinkofstrom, my other guest, Olga Petrofsky, is brown-haired and peach-cheeked, with a slightly retroussé nose, laughing manner and a heart as open as her big soft eyes. These she has placed, I think, upon the broad shouldered American, Johnny Bristow, who has walked by her side from the train. Bristow has been on the Manchurian Peninsula and in Niuchwang for nearly a year selling the cotton goods of the Rhode Island mills. The time he has stolen from business has been very pleasantly occupied in a flirtation with Mademoiselle Petrofsky which has grown from polite amatory skirmish to a love affair that I think will result in marriage. Russian young ladies in the Far East under the exigencies of a frontier-life have a great deal more liberty than would be granted them in St. Petersburg or Moscow, and though her brother

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the Captain has sometimes looked dubiously upon the American business man's attentions to his sister, he has wisely reflected: "When you are in Manchuria, do as Manchurians do."

Then I give a sigh of relief as my gentlemen guests are shown to their room by Ah Tow, and the ladies made comfortable in two pretty chambers by San Shoo's attentions and I am left alone with the thoughts that have been rushing through my brain ever since poor Sendai's eyes have looked into mine from the asparagus trench by the river.

I am horrified when I contemplate the terrible position in which the sudden outbreak of the war has put my devoted admirer. I think of the carefully examined passports on each departing train; I look out at the Cossack patrols along the railway alert and vigilant, and make up my mind that I must aid him. Not that I love him, but when a man risks his life just to see a girl's bright eyes, she must do something to keep him from the ignoble death of a military outlaw.

A few quick, shuddering reflections, and American common sense tells me the best thing I can do for Sendai just at present is to be as gay, debonair and light hearted as possible to my guests so that they will

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not guess I have any tremendous adventure on my mind.

Consequently I run to my room and make myself as pretty as I can for dinner. Returning from this, I find my party are gathered togather in the parlor preparatory to going into the dining-room. To us enters Captain Petrofsky, who takes his sister in his arms and, looking her over to see that she is safe from shot and shell, gives her the usual Russian kiss upon both cheeks. Bowing to me, he says effusively: "I am delighted that Colonel Genke's arrival this evening has made it possible for me to accept your invitation to join you at dinner, kind Mademoiselle Armstrong."

A moment later we stroll across the hall into the dining-room, I giving the Captain my arm and permitting the Baron to escort Madame Klinkofstrom so the widow will not be too jealous of me, Johnny Bristow, of course, taking in pretty Mademoiselle Petrofsky.

So we sit down to a very pleasant meal.

True, most of our repast is canned, but the asparagus tips for our *entré* have come from the Sacramento River valley and are superb.

Looking upon these I cannot help thinking of the poor Prince slaving in the asparagus bed to conceal

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his rank and nationality from surrounding Russians, and my appetite seems to leave me.

But my languor with knife and fork does not affect my guests. As Yaling's little sheep meat flanked by canned green peas is placed before us, Olga cries out enthusiastically: "Fresh lamb! Oh, what a luxury!"

"Fresh lamb!" remarks the Baron. "Where under Heaven did you get it from?"

"From the man who furnishes all good things in this village—Yaling! Our Chinese official and head magistrate," I say, anxious to put in a good word for our commissary-general.

"Yaling?" observes Schevitch. "Humph, the fellow who commands the Chinese militia here and is judge of the little district?"

"Yes, and who holds every other office," reply I proudly.

"Too many offices," grins the Baron and devotes himself with very good appetite to the lamb and the dinner, which runs along very pleasantly, the watercress salad making another hit and a pair of big chickens that I have had slaughtered producing great enthusiasm.

"My dear Hilda, you live better than the Viceroy, and I have dined at his table several times lately,"

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remarks Sophie, taking her blue eyes for a moment from their languishing contemplation of the blond Schevitch beside her.

Then the dessert being brought on, the California canned fruits seem to please everyone; the scourge of war is forgotten, for champagne is flowing merrily and the conversation has become as sparkling as the wine. Despite this, I soon after take the ladies with me into the parlor, where we will have coffee Russian fashion, leaving the gentlemen under Ah Tow's care to enjoy their cigars.

But we have not been by ourselves very long before Johnny Bristow, preferring the bright eyes of Miss Petrofsky to the pleasure of his cigar, comes in to us, though the young Russian Captain and the Baron still remain in the dining-room wooing nicotine.

A little later, implored by Sophie's glance, I, acting as hostess, trip across the passage to the dining-room, which is screened only from the hall by a very light drapery, to request Schevitch and Petrofsky to throw away ceremony, bring their cigars along and join us in the parlor.

My fingers are already on the curtains to draw them aside when I pause, some words in French, a language that I know pretty well, reaching my ears from the lips of Baron Schevitch. As their import

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dawns on me, I am confident he is speaking in French for fear some of the Chinese servants may understand him if he uses Russian, with which tongue many of the Manchurian Chinese are now quite familiar.

He is asking in cautious tone: "You know this Yaling, Captain Petrofsky?"

"Of course I do," answers the Captain. "I have commanded the troops in the village here for over a month. He's the local native magistrate."

"Well, he is the Chinaman I have been requested to investigate."

"Investigate! For what?" asks Petrofsky. "He has given us some very good beef at times."

"Yes," answers Schevitch, "but it has been hinted to the powers that be that, though Yaling commands the militia here, he also commands the local Hun-hutzes; that after these pestilent bandits have marauded and attacked Russian guards at night, in the morning he takes off his bandit arms, puts on his militia uniform and heads the same band, who are now transformed into local constabulary, to chase themselves all over the country. Of course, they never catch themselves."

At this Petrofsky bursts out laughing, then jeers savagely: "Well, if I catch his band with my Siberian soldiers, *they'll know they're caught,* when we exter-

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minate them." A moment later he asks dubiously: "But why has this dinner put Yaling in your head? The Chinese official seems a very good fellow and has always been most obligingly obsequious to me."

"This spring lamb," replies the Baron. "It is remarkably suspicious."

"Spring lamb! You think it poisoned?" mutters the Captain with an astounded start.

"Not a bit. I enjoyed it thoroughly," answers Schevitch with a light laugh. "But have you ever seen any sheep about this village or along the whole line of the railway?"

"No," answers Petrofsky. "Sheep wouldn't live long with my hungry boys in their vicinity."

"Very well; the only sheep in the country are far away in the recesses of those hills, and no Chinese official, unless he were one of the Hun-hu-tzes, or at least known to be favorable to them, would dare to go up there to get them," remarks the Baron in contemplative voice; adding: "In addition, none of his followers would dare venture there unless they were equally friendly to the local bandits."

Into the conversation, forgetting prudence, I intrude. I step into the room and say indignantly: "Baron Schevitch, this is monstrous! Because Yaling, who has for the last three years got me everything

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I wanted in this village, from a codfish to an early muskmelon, does me the favor to exert himself to give my guests, at my petition, a good dinner, you put a suspicion upon the poor man that in the present excited state of the country might doom him to death by hasty court-martial."

Here a new phase in Baron Schevitch's character greets me. He bites his lip in annoyance but rising, observes: "Honored Mademoiselle Armstrong, though I don't wish to dictate to my hostess, who has been so kindly hospitable to me this evening, still I must request you to give no hint of my suspicions to the Chinese official."

"Pish!" I remark angrily. "I shall, of course, say what I deem best for poor Yaling's interests."

"Then since you force it from me"—Schevitch's voice becomes bureaucratic—"I must demand this officially."

"And as what official?" I answer pertly. "You don't wear a Russian uniform."

The Baron bites his lip again; then says to me under his breath: "As the private agent of the Russian Viceroy."

"Ah, at last I know your profession!" I sneer, and there flashes through me the wondrous judgment of

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the Japanese engineer officer and his words to me in Tokyo.

"I am sorry you forced me to tell you my exact relationship to General Alexeieff," continues Schevitch suavely, "but Captain Petrofsky, as head of the garrison of this village, can substantiate my words."

"I can," answers the Captain shortly. "I am directed to bow to Baron Schevitch in all affairs that are not strictly military."

"Now," remarks the Baron caustically, yet suavely, "I am sure my charming hostess will give me her word not to communicate my suspicions to the Chinese magistrate."

"Under these circumstances, of course, I am compelled to accord my promise," I say. "I know what a state of war means, and I presume if I did not you would send me at once to——"

"Only as far as Niuchwang," remarks Schevitch pleasantly; "but I know Miss Armstrong having given her word, will keep it. Now supposing we join the other ladies and forget everything but the smiles of the fair sex. Also I believe somebody suggested after dinner a game of American poker."

As the Captain precedes us into the parlor, the bureaucrat whispers in my ear: "You mustn't look so

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indignantly at me. You know an unkind glance would break the heart of Schevitch."

"Yes, from the widow in there," I say flirtatiously.

"Oh, poor Sophie."

His tone is such that I am glad "poor Sophie" doesn't hear it, and say modestly, but coquettishly: "She is much prettier than I."

"Prettier than *you?* By Saint Vladimir, no one is more beautiful at this moment! Whose eyes are so bright, whose cheeks are so flushed with roses, whose little hand is so alluringly trembling as she places it on my arm?" In his emotional foreign way, Serge audaciously kisses the tips of my fingers. There is a greater confidence and command in his bearing to me. Good Heaven! does the handsome blond fellow think he'll win Hilda Armstrong?

This speech I do not answer scornfully as I would like to, because I fear to gain the disfavor of the secret agent of the Russian government. In some way it may bring additional peril on the unfortunate Sendai. That also is the reason I gave Schevitch my promise not to warn poor Yaling. I feel that entire liberty of action and freedom from all suspicion is necessary for me to help the hapless Japanese Prince, whose love for me may condemn him to a cruel death.

These emotions run through me in spasms. This

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evening as we play a little game of poker, which the Russians like as well as the Americans, whose eyes so bright as mine, whose cheeks so blushing, whose fingers as they deal the cards so vivaciously trembling as Hilda Armstrong's as she displays four hearts and one diamond and hysterically announces she has a flush? For the game reminds me of the dashing Sendai as he played poker in the tea-house of the Rising Sun to win a shivering geisha girl kneeling on a mat the night of the water fete in Tokyo. Thinking of him now in the garden outside hiding from Russian troops, I become so agitated I frenziedly open a jackpot on a bobtail straight and fortunately win it by drawing the necessary card.

As I frantically show my hand and rake in the stakes, a kind of astounded silence falls on the players. But the ladies cry out as I follow this up by a few minutes later opening another jackpot on a pair of deuces and win it by drawing three cards that contain a couple of four-spots.

The foreign gentlemen are too polite to criticise my poker enormities, though I fear Captain Petrofsky thinks I am a deliberate cheat. Johnny Bristow, in his brusque American way, however, remarks as I pocket my roubles: "You play quite a new style of

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jackpots, Miss Armstrong; very effective, too!" After the game is finished I overhear him whispering to Schevitch: "In Arizona they kill men for that kind of poker!"

As for the Baron, he simply smiles on me in his suave way and I foolishly let my desire to gain his favor become apparent to Sŏphie Klinkofstrom. Before the evening is over that young widow's blue eyes from sapphires have grown into fire opals as they inspect me with the baneful light of that uncanny gem. Perhaps she thinks my devotion to Schevitch is to punish her for having had the handsome Baron by her side on the railway excursion.

Then Captain Petrofsky bids us good evening, I asking him if possible to join us at breakfast. The gentlemen would stroll down with him to his quarters in the village, but he stops them by saying: "On your return without me, across the bridge, you'd probably be shot by my sentries."

A few minutes after we hear him hoarsely challenged by the patrol as he reaches the bridge.

Turning from this, my guests, being tired from the railroad journey in a train crowded to suffocation, we all go to our rooms. At the door of my chamber Olga whispers to me: "You have tortured poor Sophie this evening by making a slave of her special escort that

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she brought all the way from Port Arthur for a quiet little tête-à-tête love in the hills."

At her remark I laugh in attempted carelessness; but as I pace my bedroom floor I get to thinking—thinking of my poor coolie gardener, planning how to save the life of the Prince who loves me so devotedly. I am not vain, but what girl can help feeling some compassion for a man who risks his life for one glance of her eyes, and then by cruel circumstances is not permitted even to speak to her, surrounded by his enemies. As I glance in my mirror I don't wonder at Sendai's being wild to see me. I have certainly the prettiest figure. But being modest in regard to my charms, I turn my attention away from them and devote my mind to projects for the salvation of my unfortunate adorer, a wild idea having entered my mind that, at a pinch, he might be concealed in one of my two big clothes-closets that open from the end of my chamber. Either of them is as large as a small room, and one has a special door from the hall. But that would be too desperate a method I conclude, with so many Chinese servants about.

Schevitch this evening has displayed his love for me. Perhaps I can use the Baron's passion to save the Japanese Prince. If so I shall not hesitate to give the secret agent of Russia a slight encourage-

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ment. All is fair in love or war, and this is love, and war too, with a vengeance!

Shuddering about Sendai reminds me of the peril of poor Yaling, whose lamb for my guests has brought suspicion on him. I cannot under my promise give him a hint of his danger; but I will speak if I think it is necessary for Yaling's security. I'm too American to be bossed by any man, and extorted promises, I have been told, are not legally binding. Oh, if Father were here to ask his advice about the matter! I know he thinks a good deal of Sendai. But Dad would tell me to mind my own business. That would be his American, unromantic horse sense, in a land where martial law is proclaimed and barbarous war is being waged. The Russians shoot the Chinese on suspicion; from the Muscovites, inflamed by rage at the sudden onslaught of the Mikado's forces, a Japanese, thought to be a spy, would have no chance of mercy. Neither would the woman who aided him.

About this time there suddenly flashes through my brain this astounding and horrifying thought: "If Schevitch's suspicion is correct, and Yaling is the head of the local Hun-hu-tzes, and is seized upon and tried by court-martial, it will greatly increase Sendai's danger."

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With this comes another excited trembling inspiration. "Who engaged the gardener and permitted him to work in our garden? Yaling! If Yaling is an enemy of the Russian government he probably knows that Prince Sendai is a Japanese officer; and to give him a slight chance of safety has made him my gardener and set him to digging that asparagus trench."

I had half determined to keep away from Sendai, believing that to be his best chance of safety. But now I must warn him that the suspicions of the Russian official are directed to Yaling, his Chinese protector.

As I think this I have turned hastily to my door to go down to the garden. But the clock striking twelve makes me pause and mutter to myself: "Idiot! Sendai would not be toiling at the asparagus trench at midnight. Even coolies are supposed to sleep! Besides," I reflect, a moment later, "near the railroad track and bridge the Russian sentries are so alert that if I did not answer their challenge in the darkness, I should probably be shot down. That asparagus trench is not twenty-five yards from the north abutment of that bridge they guard so jealously."

Therefore I slip off my clothes and tumble into bed, where I toss about till nearly morning.

Sendai! Sendai!

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I can think of nothing but Sendai and his peril.

Finally sleep comes upon me, but I have an awful dream. I see Sendai hung up as a spy in my ice-house like I had seen the lambs Yaling had sent me in the morning. Schevitch is telling me he will have Japanese mutton for breakfast; and that I am to be executed for cheating at poker.

I awake with a little scream of horror and spring out of bed.

The sun is rising. The rumble of a train crossing the bridge recalls to me the awful incidents of the previous day. My bedroom windows face the railway. I glance out; despite myself, my eyes will turn towards the asparagus trench at the bottom of my garden.

I rub my sleepy eyes and start with astonishment. For some reason the unfortunate Sendai must have slaved all night. An additional pile of mould covered with manure is evidence of it, though the asparagus trench seems to my distant view of it no larger than it was the day before.

This is very curious.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE JUGGLER AT THE WEDDING SUPPER.

After washing my face to be sure the cobwebs are out of my eyes, I glance from my window again.

As I look I see old Yaling coming from my kitchen, which is situated at the extreme right of my rambling cottage. The smoke from its chimney indicates that my cooks are already at work. Probably the kind-hearted Chinaman has brought some additional luxury for my guests.

Holding a package in his hand, he is jabbering with Ah Tow, who has come out from the kitchen with him. A moment later Papa's valet returns to his household duties and the Chinese magistrate, trudging over the frosty earth, makes his way towards the bottom of my garden, and reaching the little house for garden tools that is next to my hotbeds leaves his package in it. Then he placidly takes his way back through the garden and returns to the village, not approaching the railroad tracks, which are patroled by the Russian sentries.

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A few minutes after I see my coolie gardener coming out of the asparagus trench and wandering, shovel in hand, to the tool house. Quite shortly after he reappears, the package in his hand. Carelessly lounging upon one of my hotbeds, he opens the matting that holds it together and begins to make his breakfast of its contents, eating with hands and teeth, like coolies of the lowest class. Then comes the invariable tobacco. He is smoking a cigarette and gazing coolly at a hand car that, propelled by some section laborers guarded by four soldiers, passes along the railway.

By this time I have summoned San Shoo and made my morning toilette. No sounds of awakening reach my ears from the other rooms. The chamber occupied by Schevitch and Johnny Bristow is at the other end of the house and doesn't look out upon this portion of the garden. I think I will venture a walk through my grounds, for I am now quite positive that Yaling knows more than that Sendai is merely a coolie gardener; if so, the Prince must be warned of the additional danger that will come upon him should the Chinese magistrate be seized.

It is not over six hundred feet from my cottage to the river bank of my garden, and it doesn't take me more than two minutes to stroll down carelessly to my

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hotbeds. But when I reach there Sendai has disappeared. The remnants of his meal shock me; the Japanese aristocrat, accustomed to every luxury, has been devouring the hard, black bean-cake of the country and has been drinking *kvass,* the nauseous native beer. The smoke that lingers about the place indicates he has been using the vilest coolie cigarettes.

Then as I reflect on the dainty breakfast I am about to give my guests I think how much I should like to send Sendai a few of the luxuries that will grace my table—if I but dared. Anyway, I must speak to him and tell him of the additional menace to his life arising from the Russian's suspicions of Yaling.

Sendai is probably working in the asparagus trench. I stroll up to it and gaze down into its depths. There is no evidence of Sendai. Notwithstanding the additional pile of earth covered by manure, which indicates a tremendous amount of labor, the asparagus trench is apparently no larger or deeper than it had been the night before.

Sendai cannot have gone very far. He must be within hearing of my voice. I must speak to him and venture to call in a low tone: "Coolie! John Coolie! You sabe, come here! Missie wants you!" The only answer I receive is the quiet rush of the icy

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current of the river by which I stand and the tramp of the Russian patrol on the abutment by the water tank, though the soldiers are screened from me by the clump of evergreen trees.

Once more I speak peremptorily: "John Chinaman, why you hide from your missie? You no have planted hotbeds. Yaling, you sabe, tell me you no good. You come right here, quick, or you catchee it!"

This will give a hint to Sendai's quick mind that in some way I know Yaling is connected with him; that for his own safety he must come and hear my words.

Receiving no answer, through my mind flashes the noble intrepidity of the Japanese fugitive, who, despite his desperate strait, will permit himself no communication with me, fearing to put peril upon the American girl he has journeyed so far to see.

Desperately I am about to speak again, when the voice of Olga Petrofsky gives me a sudden start. The bright Russian girl from a little distance laughs: "Chinese gardener no good, eh? Heap lazy; no plantee hotbeds, eh? No spring vegetables for Miss Americansky."

"Well, I hardly think Miss Americansky will stay here long enough for spring vegetables," remarks Johnny Bristow, who stands beside the Russian young lady.

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Apparently they had seen me rummaging about my hotbeds and strolled down to me from the cottage. Both look very happily excited, but at the suggestion of American exodus from Manchuria, Olga turns her brown eyes piteously towards the stalwart young Yankee who stands beside her.

"Aha, you have been having an early morning flirtation!" I laugh, to cover my embarrassment.

At this both of their faces grow red, then wondrously happy. "Yes, we have a little secret for you," answers Johnny promptly. "When I leave Manchuria I hope to take Olga with me, and that will be within a few days."

"Oh, I'm so glad," I whisper, and seizing upon Olga, who has turned bashfully away, give her a kiss of congratulation. "You have won the best fellow in Manchuria."

"Not even excepting Baron Schevitch?" murmurs Miss Petrofsky, playfully. As she returns my kiss I note upon her sweet lips the faint odor of tobacco. Johnny Bristow is smoking. Bristow's moustache must have been where my lips now are.

Ah Tow is yelling from the front door: "Blekefast! Blekefast! Comee quick, catchee him hot!" and Baron Schevitch and Sophie Klinkofstrom are wav-

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ing their hands to us from the front door, suggesting morning appetite and hurry.

There is nothing for me to do at present but to leave poor Sendai to his coolie labor, coolie privations and princely magnanimity in his desperate peril.

As we come up the little path the Baron runs down to meet us. Johnny and Olga walking ahead, the Russian falls in at my side and remarks, affably: "My sweet hostess is an early riser."

"Yes, when you can't sleep, just as well get up!" I answer flippantly.

"Aha, disturbed slumbers!" Schevitch glances at me searchingly; then mutters: "By Saint Constantine, you look it!"

"Do I?" I giggle nervously. "I had an awful nightmare. I dreamed you had Yaling hung up like his spring lamb." Then, impressed by the peril of the unfortunate Chinese official, I whisper, pleadingly: "Don't accuse the poor fellow without better evidence than his desire to do my behests and feed you well."

"Well, I suppose I could hardly convict him before a court-martial on nothing stronger than spring lamb," remarks the Baron, laughingly; adding, rather eagerly: "There is some more of it for breakfast, I hope?"

"I think there is," I return; then give a start

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as my escort says: "Allow me," and kneels at my feet. In my agitation I had failed to tie securely the lace of one of my rather fetching high-heeled bottines.

Lingering over the knot, Schevitch's touch seems authoritative. I feel as if I would like to kick him, but restraining myself, say gratefully: "Thank you, very much."

This little passage between us is noted by Sophie from my front door, and I do not think it increases her love for me. She is a very jealous woman. She knows I was considered to have the prettiest ankle in Port Arthur. As I raise my skirts slightly and run up to join her at the portal, she remarks: "Is your maid always so careless about your footgear that you require the assistance of gentlemen, Hilda?"

"No," I reply nonchalantly, "Baron Schevitch is seldom in attendance to officiate before breakfast."

At my foolish speech, Sophie's eyes glow like fire opals; but she contrives to laugh: "You romp about so, you mad girl, I wonder you keep anything on your extremities."

"Yes, Dad says my shoe bills are enormous."

"What, for such *little* feet!" Sophie giggles and kisses me. Beware of the blonde woman who kisses another woman!

We are about to step into the dining-room when

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Petrofsky comes in to us quite excitedly and says: "Fortunately, Colonel Genke gave me leave for breakfast and the company of my sister;" then laughs as he salutes her: "Olga, your cheeks are very red."

Soon after we all sit down to a meal of which I am proud, for there are plenty of lamb chops, lots of American buckwheat cakes, real maple syrup and some fresh fish also.

"I suppose," I whisper rather jeeringly to Baron Schevitch, who sits next to me, "these trout are additional evidence? Yaling brought them this morning; also these fresh flowers."

I am sorry I made the remark, because soon after I hear Schevitch say earnestly to Petrofsky: "Have you discovered yet where that lamb came from?"

"No," answers the Captain, "but I know where that lamb's going to!" and he proceeds to demolish four or five additional chops. Russian soldiers have active appetites during active service.

Yet as the Captain eats he seems to be gloomy; and some questions from his sister make him say: "There is an ugly report telegraphed this morning from Mukden that the European journals have an account of a dastardly attack upon the *Variag* and the *Koriets* at Chemulpo. A whole Japanese fleet overpowered and destroyed them in a neutral Korean port

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despite the protests of the commanders of the French, German and English war vessels; though they state the Captain of an American gunboat made no attempt to interpose in the unjust attack."

As I reflect that the Russians have only just received news that my Chinaman whispered to me yesterday, the Captain continues: "The despatches also say that Americans generally sympathize with Japan in its war upon us." Petrofsky looks so indignantly at the stalwart Jack Bristow that tears fly into Olga's eyes.

The American, however, meets this very promptly; he says shortly: "Of course, I do not know the feelings of my countrymen, not having been in the United States for over a year, but I have no doubt the American nation in this unfortunate affair will strictly mind its own business and make all the money it decently can impartially out of both combatants. This reminds me that I shall be compelled by this coming war, which has absolutely destroyed all business, to leave Manchuria in a few days. In this regard, Petrofsky, as breakfast is finished, may I request a few words with you? I need hardly state that you have my highest esteem; I hope I shall always have your friendship, and after you have heard me—your brotherhood."

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"Certainly," replies the Captain. He casts a curious glance at his sister, who has turned to the window to conceal a face that is alternately very pale and furiously red.

The two gentlemen light their cigars and stroll out together, leaving Schevitch and Madame Klinkofstrom gazing inquiringly at me; then they devote their attention to Olga, whose blushes and embarrassed nervousness give them a hint of what is in the air. The young Russian girl is agitatedly watching her brother and her suitor as they pace the garden path together conversing earnestly. I glide to her side.

To me she pleads: "Hilda, you are an American. You know all about Monsieur Bristow in America. Your words would aid Jack with my brother."

"It's all right, my dear girl," I answer; "they're coming in, arm in arm."

All this time I am thinking how this will affect the unfortunate Prince toiling in my garden.

A minute after I step into my parlor, where the gentlemen have gone for consultation, and remark: "Permit me to take the liberty of a hostess and give you, Captain Petrofsky, some facts in regard to Mr. Bristow, whom I have known long and well in America."

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"Thank you, my dear Miss Armstrong," replies Jack gratefully.

"Then, Captain, I can tell you," I say with American butt-in-ishness, "that Johnny Bristow is as good a fellow as you can find in Rhode Island. Besides, I am pretty sure he owns a good deal of stock in the big Fall River mills and has what we in Yankeeland call 'rocks.'"

"That is not necessary," replies Petrofsky. "Monsieur Bristow has already given me ample assurance of his financial ability to take good care of a wife. I am not disposed to ask any extraordinary provision for Olga, because she can only have a small settlement from me. My father, the old general, was too honest to become very rich, though he commanded a Trans-Caspian district for several years before his death. Our mother having long passed away, I am my sister's only guardian, and for the past few days have been distracted, not knowing where to send her in case of Japanese invasion of Manchuria. If Olga has given her heart to you, my American brother, I thank God that my dear sister will have a home far away from the clash of arms." He wrings Jack's hand.

"Now, as Jack is going away very soon and the marriage must take place very shortly," I say, pertly,

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"you had better step into the dining-room, where you will find your sister, Captain Petrofsky, and give her a kiss and your blessing."

"Ah, my sister loves Monsieur Bristow?" queries Petrofsky, earnestly.

"Rather!" I answer, so confidently that Jack emits a merry laugh.

I am delighted also. The approaching wedding will occupy my guests' thoughts. I have been wondering how to keep them sufficiently busy in this cooped-up place to prevent their patrolling my grounds and paying much attention to the lower end of the garden. Coming nuptials will make everybody busy and diminish Sendai's danger.

A moment after, Captain Petrofsky returns and asks me excitedly: "Can we use your parlor for the ceremony?"

"What? Olga is to be married here?"

"Yes, with your permission, esteemed Miss Armstrong?"

"When?"

"This evening."

I excitedly clap my hands. Jack Bristow's nuptials will be a factor in Prince Sendai's safety. Even the suave Schevitch, who, they tell me, is to be the

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best man, will have enough to do to keep his thoughts from official investigation of Yaling.

In a feverish, excited way I do everything in my power to make the ceremony a success. All three gentlemen hastily leave us to go down to the village to make the necessary arrangements, Petrofsky to get leave for the evening from Colonel Genke, Schevitch to go on to Polandien, the district headquarters, where the padre or Russian priest of Petrofsky's regiment is sure to be found. "I will bring him back with me," says the energetic Baron to the excited and blushing Olga; "likewise, if I can get leave for them, enough of the regimental band to play your wedding march."

We three ladies being alone together, as hostess, I start Ah Tow to making my household ready for the hymeneal festival, telling him to demand from Yaling a lot of evergreens for parlor decoration; also two more Chinese boys to wait upon my guests.

Though I am very anxious to communicate with Sendai, I am compelled to devote myself with Sophie to the bride's costume. Olga has brought little with her. In fact, there had been no room for baggage upon the train. I have several trunks full of dresses at my country bungalow, and between Sophie, myself and San Shoo we arrange a very simple but pretty

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nuptial robe of pure white, Russian fashion, for the bride. "Though we will only be able to give you artificial orange blossoms," I whisper to the blushing girl.

But Olga is so happy I think she'd marry Jack Bristow in rags, pajamas or any old thing if necessary.

Yet all the time my brain seems to be on fire. How shall I speak with Sendai? Twice I have ventured down the garden alone, but Olga or Sophie has called me back to ask about some article of dress, or Ah Tow has yelled after me: "Lookie here, Missie, how about champlagne glasses for all Russie officers?"

Petrofsky has told me that some of his comrades in the regiment, if they can obtain leave, will surely attend the ceremony.

Besides, every now and then there is a train going down towards Port Arthur laden with soldiers, and I am compelled to stay with the rest of the ladies and wave flags to them, which the sunny-haired Russian boys answer with cries and bravos and cheers, as they journey perhaps to death on the field of battle.

So the day has hurried on without my having a single opportunity of safely getting word to the Prince. I know he is working down there. Another mound covered by manure is making its appearance. Why is

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it necessary for Sendai to be always slaving to make the Russians believe he is a coolie? Some coolies are very lazy. There is one lying down at the upper end of my compound who has done nothing but smoke cigarettes for an hour—though I believe he brought a bundle of green branches from Yaling early in the day.

By this time the gentlemen have come back again, and that puts additional impediment to my communication with the unfortunate Japanese Prince.

Jack has returned from the village and says he has made all his business arrangements by telegraph; and that Colonel Genke had been very kind in permitting him the use of the lines for a few minutes. Consequently it will not be necessary for him to go back to Dalny; he can take his bride immediately on to Niuchwang.

"Wait a couple of days and Dad will be back and we'll join you there," I suggest.

Just here Schevitch returns to make me more anxious than ever about Sendai. He hears my speech and looks mournfully at me as he states that the padre has journeyed with him on the train from Polandien and is already in the village; that he has brought half a dozen regimental musicians with him for the wedding march and two or three officers of

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the regiment who have succeeded in getting leave for the evening. "Though at Polandien it was almost more than we could do to get aboard the return train, which had been commandeered for a regiment that has been forwarded hurriedly from Harbin. If the Japs dare to land on this peninsula they'll get death," he remarks. Then chancing to note Sendai's magnificent present that has been brought out for the adornment of my parlor for the wedding festivity, he remarks: "Why, haven't I seen that in Sendai's quarters in Tokyo?"

"Yes," I reply; "it was a present from the Prince on my leaving the Japanese Capital."

Schevitch strolls up to it, glances over its magnificent embellishments, and observes: "I didn't suppose the Sendais would permit that unrivaled piece of ancient cloisonné to leave their family. The old Daimio houses hoard these things as if they were much more precious than family diamonds."

Anxiety making me foolish, I laugh, suggestively: "Perhaps Sendai doesn't think it will *leave* his family," and am horrified at the miserable jealousy that for a moment makes Schevitch's cheeks exceedingly pale. Why do so many men love me? It's an awful bother.

"*Diable!*" he remarks, mockingly; "then I presume

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we have one of our Japanese enemies in the room?"

"Pshaw, do you suppose Olga's an American because she's going to marry Jack Bristow?" I cry, impulsively.

I could bite off my tongue for this crazy insinuation. Schevitch's eyes instead of being mournful become moodily vindictive. I know now he thinks I am promised to Sendai and hates him not merely with a race hatred, but with a personal malignity. If ever he gets the chance, God help my Japanese adorer in the garden! Dad says I'm a fool for my impulsive speeches, but I'm not an idiot, only I speak first and reflect afterward.

I have demanded from Yaling flowers, if possible —if not, evergreens—for the decoration of the premises. That Chinese official is in the house jabbering with my servants as he delivers to them a lot of Siberian mistletoe and Manchurian holly. In his kindly Mongolian way, in company with the lazy coolie, who I now learn is to aid my servants in the dining-room, he is arranging the green boughs about the house.

To the secret agent of Russia I whisper, jeeringly: "Don't those evergreens Yaling has brought from the hills add to your Hun-hu-tze suspicions of my Chinese coadjutor?"

Whereupon Schevitch returns in low voice: "At

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your peril, don't forget your promise! No word to that suspect. Military law is here, Miss Armstrong, and you must be aware, though American, you are subject to it."

"Thank you for reminding me," I reply. Then I affect a playful dread and plead riantly: "You don't suppose they'll shoot me for fresh lamb, do you?" A moment after the laugh leaves my face and I shiver. I am perfectly aware that for aiding a Japanese spy the Russians, in their present temper, might even execute me, Hilda Armstrong, a sovereign American girl. The sensational tragedy would permit blood-red headlines in the New York evening papers, but I wonder if the United States would make war upon Russia for it. I don't suppose they would, because I am going to do things that, under military law, American common sense tells me I should not do.

I look at poor Yaling and conclude that I will give him a hint of his danger. If he is innocent he will not perceive it; should he be guilty he will probably take my tip.

We are all bustling about putting up the sweet-smelling leaves in the parlor, hall and dining-room. I know that a broken bough among certain of the Turkoman and Mongolian tribes of Asia is considered a warning signal. During our decoration labors, at

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my first opportunity when Schevitch's eyes are not upon me, I break, apparently accidentally, a small evergreen branch and drop it at the foot of the Chinese official, who is directing the coolies near me.

The first of these Yaling does not appear to notice, but a minute or two after when I obtain another chance and break another bough, as it slips from my trembling fingers and falls at his feet, his sharp little Tartar eyes are turned upon me inquiringly. Then he goes on with his work.

Two minutes later we are hanging up the green stuff in the hall. Schevitch has stepped out onto the little front portico, where the winter sun rests quite warmly, and has lighted a cigarette. I have another opportunity. I break another bough and as it falls from my quaking hand to the floor immediately in front of the Chinese magistrate a sudden change seems to come over him.

For a moment his feet in their big blue felt-soled Chinese shoes quiver slightly; his almond optics have a startled appearance. He looks at me anxiously.

I break deliberately a bough of Siberian holly and drop it in front of him.

As he perceives I do this with intention, Yaling's yellow face becomes of an ashy, deathly gray hue, but his Tartar eyes flash with a quick, cunning, cat-like

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resolution. He calmly directs his coolie boys till the decoration is finished, then whispers a few hurried words in a Mongol dialect to the lazy coolie. As I stroll out to Schevitch and say: "I will enjoy the smoke of your cigarette second hand, my dear Baron," I note Yaling departing from my compound and taking his way towards the village with steps that seem to grow quicker and more athletic the greater the distance he puts between himself and my cottage.

Shortly after we have an early dinner and the bride disappears to be arrayed for the ceremony. I go to my room and put on an evening gown. Then, as the sun descends in the west, my front gate opens and there comes up the path leading from the railroad the Russian regimental padre in his priest's cap and robes of office preceded by a boy bearing an image of Olga's patron saint, followed respectfully by Captain Petrofsky and four other Russian officers, headed by the little band of music; also a squad of Russian infantry to see that their officers are safe during festivity. Behind them marches stern and erect a military-looking man in the full uniform of a Russian colonel. It is Genke, who has stolen a little time from his duties as commandant of the troops guarding the railroad to give his blessing to the sister of his favorite captain. The precise, resolute face of this man who

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had been a hero in the Russo-Turkish war and fought under Skobeleff at Geok Tepé is kindly as he thanks me for my hospitality to a Russian girl in a land upon which war has now descended. But as I look into the Colonel's clear, steel-gray eyes, I know I am gazing on an officer who would have little mercy for a captured spy, beyond the pale of military sympathy and outside military law.

Some words that he says to one of his captains strike my ear and make me desperate. "Captain Gorgy, did you issue the orders for the arrest before you left my quarters?" he remarks in military tone.

"Yes, Colonel," answers the Captain, saluting; "a lieutenant and a platoon of men are seeking for the old Chinaman. I am sorry I had the orders; he gave us some very good beef."

I know to whom they refer—Yaling! It is dark now. At my first opportunity I must warn Sendai. His life depends upon it.

Then the wedding music sounds sweetly and softly as if there were naught but happiness upon this earth, and the bride enters my parlor looking very pretty—very trembling—very blushing—yet extremely happy as she gazes at the big American bridegroom standing beside her.

Sophie in a soft green gauze looks extremely lan-

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guishing as she stations herself with Schevitch just behind Jack Bristow and his bride.

The wedding ceremony is over. As the groom is not a member of the Russian Church the canopy and candles have been omitted. The padre has blessed them. The ring has passed, Russian fashion. Colonel Genke has placed his silvery moustache upon Olga's forehead and presented her with a picture of her patron saint.

Every one is soon in my dining-room drinking the bride's health. Champagne is flowing. Even the martinet Genke, unbending under its influence, is saying that he hopes that the bond between a Russian young lady and an American gentleman will be a harbinger of friendship between the two great countries.

As I listen to him I can see that the Russians want sympathy now that Japan is hitting them in the eye.

The whole wedding party are busy over the good things that I have had prepared for them, for I have contrived a very appetizing supper, and the frontier officers are eating a meal that they would hardly get at Alexeieff's vice-regal palace. I want to keep them occupied sufficiently to forget their hostess for a few minutes—that is all!

Now is my opportunity. I will pass into the pantry, apparently to give orders to my servants, and

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from there into the darkness. For this reason I excuse myself in rather a loud voice to Colonel Genke, who would keep his young hostess by his side and drink another glass of wine with her. To me the veteran whispers gallantly that I look even more charming than the bride.

Perhaps I do. There is a fever in my veins.

To him I return archly: "You shall tell me more of that when I come back, my dear Colonel. At present you must excuse your hostess, for I have to arrange with my own hands a *pièce de patisserie* for you. A few minutes and you will see."

I break away from him, and with a little laugh run off into my pantry. Here, dodging Ah Tow, who is busy with the other Chinese servants, I pass out by the back way into the darkness.

My feet tremble so I can scarcely walk.

Pausing a moment I kilt my long lace skirts to avoid outlying brambles, and knowing the garden path very well, trip cautiously along it. The night is not extremely dark, but the switch lights by the water-tank seem warningly bright to me. As I near these my steps are very silent; the railway bridge is so close that the Russian sentries may challenge me.

I cannot remain from my guests more than a few minutes. I grope hastily about my little garden house

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—no one is there. I glide to the asparagus trench and look in; I can distinguish no one. A touch of sanity in my mind tells me I am taking great risk for Sendai, but I do not regret it. A man who ventures his life for love of me shall at least have some return, though I cannot wed him.

I again peer into the asparagus trench. No one is there. Desperately I whisper: "Johnny Coolie! Must see you quick, Johnny Coolie!"

No answer but the rushing swish of the river as it flows past me and the tramp of the sentries on the bridge; though as I listen I think I hear a movement in the garden not very far from me. I blink about but can distinguish nothing suspicious.

Sendai will not come to me because he knows the peril word with him might bring upon me. I cannot linger, Colonel Genke will be demanding his hostess soon.

There comes floating down to me the faint music of the Russian band from my cottage on the hillside. It is a ragtime tune—one of those I heard the Japanese band play at the Tokyo water fete as Sendai won the *geisha* girl at poker.

Of a sudden a bright but cruel expedient enters my head. Not daring to use the name of the Mikado, which all Russians know, I employ the title by which

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the Japanese Emperor is commonly spoken of in Tokyo streets, and whisper into the trench: "Awful news! The *Tenshi* has been assassinated!"

At my words, from the end of the trench near the railway, arises a kind of sighing moan. As well as I can seen in the darkness, an earth-colored mat is pushed aside from the lower part of the excavation and something crawling on hands and knees comes near me and a pair of eyes blazing with agony look into mine, as to me is shuddered: "By *Izanagi*, tell me that is not true!"

"It is not! It is a cruel lie!" I whisper. "But I was compelled to have word with you."

Then comes the answer that I expect: "No communication! For your own life, esteemed young lady, leave me!"

"But I cannot go," I say eagerly, "until I have done something for the safety of the man who has risked his life for a glance of my eyes. Oh, could you not foresee coming war? Why were you so rash in your devotion to me to put yourself in this horrible jeopardy, where you dare not even conceal yourself in Tartar hut, and are compelled to dig a hole in the earth to keep you from your foes, and all this for love of me——"

My Japanese adorer must be the bravest man in the

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world. With the quick, sharp death of a spy hanging over him he absolutely laughs slightly at my terrors for him. Then he says shortly: "Not another syllable! Should I be seized, for your own safety before Russian court-martial, you must be able to swear no word of warning has been given me by you."

"But I *will* warn you!" I whisper defiantly. "Yaling, who engaged you as gardener here, is being sought for by Russian troops."

My words apparently put desperation into Sendai. They have scarce left my lips than he has disappeared into the trench as if some motive had forced him to immediate and rapid action.

I dare not call to him again. I have told him everything I can. He now knows Yaling is suspected. To remain longer were but to add to his peril. I rapidly but tremblingly make my way up the garden path to the back door of my cottage.

Before I venture into the house I hurriedly, with quaking hands, unkilt my skirts and drop the long lace petticoats about my feet so that the half-frozen river mud that must now soil my delicate boots and silken stockings shall not be noticeable.

As I enter the pantry Yaling's lazy coolie, who has been handing refreshments about in the dining-room and is now about to assist Ah Tow in bringing in the

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pièce de patisserie of the wedding supper, glances at me rather earnestly.

I look at the coolie and am sure I have never seen his cute Mongolian face before.

Then I step into my dining-room, followed by Ah Tow and the other boy, bearing two big pyramids, one of ice-cream made with condensed milk and the other a water ice of oranges, of which we have plenty in the house, a dozen of the yellow fruit decorating the dish.

As I enter the band is playing merrily and the champagne is flowing rapidly. Even the guard of troops outside the front door seem to be merry, for I had requested Colonel Genke to permit his men to drink the bride's health, and am pretty sure that they have done it quite thoroughly; the lazy coolie having carelessly given them more vodka than I had ordered.

No one has missed their hostess's presence; even Schevitch seems to be devoted to Sophie Klinkofstrom, who is seated by him eagerly whispering into his ear.

A little applause greets the two cool pyramids; Russians like sweets and the ices are unexpected. The Colonel with a smile beckons me to his side.

"I cannot vouch for the cream," I say, modestly, "but it is probably as good as you'd get at Niuchwang

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or Port Arthur. But the water ice—fresh oranges—I can recommend it."

"Yes, if you have sweetened it with your fingers," remarks Genke, with Continental military gallantry.

"I have," I laugh, "I squeezed the oranges."

"Ah, then it must be delicious."

"But everything seems appetizing tonight!" cries one of the young Russian officers, and the company fall upon the cool pyramids and wash them down with champagne.

About this time I chance to glance at the blonde widow, and note with some astonishment several patches of mud upon the green gauzes of her elaborately trimmed sweeping skirt. Has she been in the garden also—perhaps taking a lovers' stroll with Schevitch? But his boots seem immaculate.

Sophie whispers a word or two into the Baron's ear. He glances at the lower part of my robe. My eyes follow his. Great goodness! I had not kilted my skirts sufficiently high as I knelt down whispering into the trench—some of the river mud has soiled the white laces of my trailing evening gown. The tell-tale evidence is on my *jupes* now.

I grow perturbed and cry nervously to the Colonel: "I have not forgotten your invitation; now for a glass of champagne with me!"

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The gallant military martinet is about to pour out the wine when the Baron, rising, says abruptly: "Colonel Genke, can I have a word or two with you in the parlor for one moment?"

Something in Schevitch's manner makes Genke reply: "Instantly!"

But as he leaves the room he whispers pleasantly: "Fill my glass, honored Miss Armstrong; I will be back with you in a moment."

I am about to do so, but Petrofsky stepping beside me suggests, courteously: "Let me help my esteemed hostess." To me he whispers: "You are quite pale and your hand is trembling."

As he pours out the sparkling liquid, I gaze at him dazed by a sudden suspicious fear. Why has Sophie mud upon her skirts—why after her whisper did Schevitch glance at my soiled train and immediately demand word with the Colonel?

A moment later Genke commands from the hall: "Captain Petrofsky, quick, please!"

The Captain steps out to him, and I tremble as I hear Genke order: "Place a guard about the house! Let no one leave it! Then take a detail with torches and examine carefully and thoroughly the garden by the bank of the river!"

I hear Petrofsky order his men to step lively; and a

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score of twinkling torches are gliding down the river path.

Eternal Heaven! has my visit of warning brought suspicion upon Prince Sendai?

One or two of the other Russian officers would step out, but the Colonel says: "No need of your services yet, gentlemen; continue the festivities. Now, honored Miss Armstrong, I will drink with you."

I dare give no sign; I do not venture to even gaze out of the window, but try to laugh gaily and say pert, coquettish little speeches as I clink my glass with that of the Russian commander.

So the wedding fete goes on, my heart colder than the ice-cream I force myself to eat, which doesn't appear to agree with me, for I feel desperately sick as I listen with sinking spirit for Petrofsky's return. And all the time Schevitch's gray eyes are asking me questions and Sophie's blue orbs have a horrible mocking in them. Once I think she is about to open her lips to the Colonel, but the Baron's hand tightens on her round white arm restrainingly.

A few minutes later there are cries and commotion down by the bridge and Petrofsky comes hurriedly back with an additional detail of men and requests his commander to step out to him. By the Captain's face I know something momentous has happened.

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After one minute's quick conversation, Colonel Genke's words ring out: "All officers and men follow Petrofsky! Captain Gorgy, take all the railroad guards and examine the south abutment and mid-river piers of the bridge, quick!" Then, for Olga and Sophie have uttered little screams, he tries to calm us women by saying: "There is no need, ladies, to be alarmed. Though, by the blessing of God, we have caught a spy red-handed. Keep the music going."

But his words, despite the Colonel's assurance, put a stop to festivity. Jack Bristow, implored by his bride, asks hurriedly of Schevitch: "What the deuce is up?"

"Oh, nothing; but our troops have caught a Japanese spy attempting to blow up the bridge at the bottom of the grounds, that's all," answers the Baron with a curious look at me—and slips into the parlor to get a view of the garden, that is now alive with men and sparkling with torches.

The dining-room has no view of the river; so every one is in the parlor, looking out of its windows. But I dare not gaze. I slink miserably back into the dining-room and shudder and shiver and pray to God for poor Sendai, as my perturbed eyes rest upon the remnants of my feast.

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As I do so astonishment makes the blood rush through my veins and brings back warmth to my cold heart. The lazy coolie, who had been loafing and smoking about the grounds during the afternoon and waiting carelessly on my guests during the evening and recklessly giving vodka to the soldiers outside, now picks up three or four oranges from the decoration of the water ice, tosses them in the air, and, as they reach the apex of their flight, transfixes each by a flying fork. Then putting another fork in his mouth, after a peculiar, athletic contortion, he catches the last descending yellow sphere impaled upon it—and steps quietly into the butler's pantry.

God of Heaven, I've seen that marvelous juggling before! On the barge at the Tokyo water fete! Though the face in its wondrous make-up is entirely that of a Chinese boy, I know the "lazy-coolie" that has been brought here by Yaling is Kamu Kiguro, the actor of the Kabukiza Theatre, and devoted to Prince Sendai for life or for death, after the manner of the Japanese *Samurai.*

But Kiguro can do nothing to save his *daimio* now! The tramp of armed men tells me that. Genke returns to the house and says: "Ladies and gentlemen, I must ask you to vacate the parlor. My dear Miss Armstrong, I beg you to pardon me, but I am

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compelled to use your house for military purposes for an hour. The sight of a Japanese prisoner up in the village would create such excitement among the native population, I might be compelled to shoot a few of them. Captain Petrofsky and Captain Gorgy will act with me—three make a drumhead. Schevitch, we may want your evidence, though from my own eyes the prisoner's labors are evidence enough to hang a dozen men!"

My knees knock together as I think of poor Sendai. I look at the flashing torches that are coming up the garden. They are bringing in the prisoner, his hands bound behind his back with cruel cords, and heavily guarded by men who handle their guns ready to shoot him down if he dares to fly. As he enters the hall the lights flash on Sendai's face. In some way I know that my visit to him has brought destruction upon him.

I turn my face away and see back of the crowd the coolie juggler—and oh, Kiguro's eyes, as they bring his beloved master in to death!

The bride, half swooning, has been supported to her own room by her husband. Schevitch and Sophie sit in the dining-room whispering earnestly together. I pace the rear portion of my hall, the part furthest from the parlor, from which the low rumble of men's

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voices seems to drive me crazy. Three doors open from this part of the hall, one to my own bedroom, another to Dad's, which is now occupied by Olga; a third to the clothes-closet, which leads by another door into my chamber. This hall continues back to the servants' rooms and kitchen.

Soon I see Genke open the parlor door, an uncompromising harshness on his face, and hear him command: "This way, Baron Schevitch; we'll hear your evidence, though it's practically unnecessary. Lieutenant Poloff has just discovered the mine with its fuse which the prisoner was about to explode under the abutment."

Schevitch passes into the parlor with the Colonel. To myself I jeer: "Accused of attempting to blow up the bridge? What idiotic nonsense! When the unfortunate Japanese Prince came here for love of me!"

With this a little hope for Sendai enters my heart. They'll not be cruel enough to kill a man because he could not keep away from my bright eyes. At all events, notwithstanding the frightfully embarrassing nature of my explanation, whether it brings danger to me or not, the court-martial must hear the truth from my lips about the unfortunate Japanese Prince.

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EPISODE THE THIRD.

THE MIDNIGHT SUBSTITUTION.

CHAPTER VII.

SENDAI'S SACRIFICE FOR ME.

I rap rapidly on Olga's door. Jack Bristow steps out to me and looks astonished as I say: "Please let Colonel Genke know that I must give my evidence before that court."

"Indeed, you mustn't!" the American answers. "If you had anything to do with the matter you must keep quiet for your own safety, Miss Armstrong. Besides, the sight of a Japanese spy about to be executed is too cruel a spectacle for a woman's eyes."

"I were a miserable coward if I let them execute that man," I whisper hoarsely, "and did not tell them what might save his life!"

"Save the life of a Jap spy? At this moment nothing could do that," mutters Jack, unbelievingly.

Here Olga, stepping out to us, would nervously call her bridegroom to her, but he replies to the sweet girl

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very tenderly: "Remain in your room, please, dear one. I am all right, though Miss Armstrong is, I fear, in trouble!"

All the time the tramp of the sentries about the house and the low hum of conversation from the room in which the drumhead court-martial is held seem to compel my evidence. I say, frantically: "You must get me an interview with Genke."

Seeing I am resolved, Jack leads Olga in her room, gives her a reassuring kiss, comes to my side, and remarks gloomily but resolutely: "Now, Miss Armstrong, I will step in with you to the court-martial and keep you out of trouble if I can."

I imagine Bristow thinks I am demented.

Together we walk along the hall to the parlor door. In front of it stand two sentries, who cross their rifles to bar my entrance. But I call out: "Colonel Genke, please tell your men to let me in. I have some evidence to give you—evidence that is important for the prisoner."

An orderly opens the door and the Colonel, whose face is now frigid with determination, and whose bearing is that of the judicial military autocrat, says, curtly: "No court-martial can be deaf to such a demand!" and motions me into the parlor; Jack, though uninvited, resolutely stepping after me. I can see

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by Bristow's bearing that he means to stand by an American girl no matter what it may cost him. His hand is cold as he gives mine a reassuring squeeze and we look upon the cruel scene.

My parlor, still bright with the green decorations for the wedding, has become a place of awful retaliation—that they call military justice. The center-table holding Sendai's princely gift to me has been shoved aside and replaced by an upturned drum. Around this Colonel Genke and his two captains are seated. Upon it Captain Gorgy, writing hurriedly, is recording the evidence. The lamps in the room are turned up. In their full light, standing securely bound before his judges, his disguising pigtail having been pulled from his head, I see Prince Sendai. A bitter disappointment makes his dark eyes sad, but no trace of fear is upon his delicate but determined features, that are as aristocratically debonair as when he held up four queens and won a trembling geisha girl in Tokyo.

Schevitch, who has apparently finished his evidence, gives me a quick, veiled glance of awful warning; but unheeding this, I confront the dread conclave. The three officers rise to meet me and headed by Genke bow punctiliously.

"Gentlemen," I say, hurriedly, desperately, for I

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am perfectly aware I am putting peril upon myself. "I demand to be permitted to give my evidence in favor of this gentleman here who——"

But Genke, cutting short my words, interrupts me sharply: "Baron Schevitch has already identified the prisoner as Prince Sendai, an officer of the Japanese General Staff and Captain in their Engineer Corps. Your evidence is entirely unnecessary, honored Miss Armstrong."

I can see the Colonel intends to prevent my saying anything that may compromise me.

"In addition," he goes on, "the proof against the prisoner is absolutely complete. He was seized in the very act of placing a mine under the abutment of that bridge. For this purpose he had already with wondrous engineering skill, without timber supports, excavated a tunnel nearly thirty yards in length; and so small he must have crawled through it on his hands and knees. Had he not been seized, in less than an hour our railway communication with Port Arthur would have been destroyed."

"That is nonsense!" I ejaculate, hurriedly.

Here the prisoner interrupts me—the first impolite act of his life to me. "Colonel Genke," he says, "to prevent the American young lady saying a word in this trial, I announce myself as the Japanese officer

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identified by Baron Schevitch. I assert that if I had had but another hour, I would have blown up that bridge. In fact, had the earth not caved upon me last night, for I dared not use timber, I would have sent that abutment into the air while your music up here was playing the wedding march. It would have been as good as a victorious battle to my Mikado!"

There is no bravado in his concise words; he is simply making a military statement.

Then comes a scene of old-time chivalry in this modern world. The Colonel salutes his prisoner deferentially, and remarks: "I thank you, Captain Prince Sendai, for not permitting this devoted young lady's evidence, which might have been cruelly unfortunate for her. As an officer of the Japanese General Staff you know the laws of war as well as I. I have got to hang you, but I shall take off my hat to you as a brave man." Petrofsky and Gorgy also salute reverently the chivalric spirit they are going to send to another world. A half-dozen sharp words with his officers, and Genke condemns the man, whose real crime is loving me, to be hung from the girders of the bridge. "This will prove to the Chinese malcontents about us that it is death to meddle with our railway," he remarks, curtly.

As he speaks, I break in almost hysterically: "I

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will be heard! This mine business is all nonsense! It is but to save me from danger that Sendai acknowledges what makes it impossible for you to spare him."

Bound as he is, the Prince tries to interrupt me by a gesture, but I continue almost deliriously: "In Tokyo he believed himself my affianced. You cannot deny it, Sendai. Look, his princely present shows that!" I point to the magnificent cloisonné ornament as it stands upon my table.

The grandeur of the Prince's gift impresses the Russian officers. As they gaze upon it, Sendai's face seems astonished, almost appalled.

He is about to speak, but I break out deliriously again: "That man came to this country simply to see my face—his sweetheart's! Though there was sufficient feeling between his country and yours to prevent his getting a passport, it was before the war broke out. The sudden attack of the Japanese, which was as unexpected to him as to you Russian officers, cut him off from return to his country. He was compelled to seek safety in the disguise of a coolie laborer. That is his whole crime—loving me—his affianced!"

Then I pause shamefacedly. I turn away my head; my countenance, which had been pallid, grows red with blushes under Sendai's piercing glance. Oh, the gratitude in his dark eyes!

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"How do you know this?" asks Gorgy suddenly and suspiciously.

But Genke imperiously signals for me not to answer his officer.

"She knows nothing," interjects the Japanese Prince. "Do you suppose I would make a woman an accomplice in a desperate military attempt? No, no, gentlemen; esteemed Miss Armstrong," his eyes again rest gratefully upon me, "was no more cognizant of my attempt to blow up the bridge than any other lady in this house."

"I thoroughly believe you, Prince Sendai," remarks Genke sententiously. "What you have said, honored Mademoiselle, is unofficial to me, the court-martial having been closed. In addition, the fact that the prisoner was arranging the explosives to blow up the abutment of the bridge even as he was seized is proof that your words were simply the ravings of an unfortunate girl who is mad for love of a very brave gentleman, who, when he dies, shall be saluted by the troops who execute him. No, no, I'll not listen to you! Mr. Bristow, I beg you to remove your unfortunate country-woman. Don't let her say another word. His fiancée—My God—it is too horrible!"

The Russian commander turns from me to the prisoner and remarks: "Before you die, is there any-

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thing my military duty will permit me to do for you, Prince?"

Apparently Sendai thinks deeply for a moment—I believe on Genke's last remark about me—then answers quickly. "Yes, I would like to write to my family, a few minutes' interview with this young lady, and also a good cigar. I have smoked coolie tobacco until another whiff of the accursed stuff would, I think, kill me," smiles the man who is about to die.

Then how courteous they are to him who has no hope. The three officers who have condemned him each offers his cigar case, and Petrofsky says: "Mine are the best, I believe," and places one within the bound man's lips, and the Prince being helpless, lights it with his own hands.

From this, desperately angry with every one, I am almost dragged by Jack Bristow. They have accused me of loving the Prince when it is only the Prince loves me.

"Hang it, if you'd been a man, Miss Highfalutin, the Russians would have you up before a drumhead now. They must guess that you had interview with your Japanese lover and protected him. By Heaven, if you were not an American girl—and they don't want to make a breach between the two countries—God knows what military law would compel them to

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do to you!" mutters Jack, as he almost forces me along the passage. "Now, for your father's sake, not another word to Genke; you've strained his military duty to the very limit."

Olga is anxiously waiting for her young husband at the door of her chamber. As he steps in with her, I hear him whisper: "That fool Armstrong girl, who thinks every man is in love with her, has nearly put a noose about her own neck!"

"'Thinks every man in love with her!'" I jeer mentally, "I *know* Sendai is in love with me! What greater passion could man show for woman than dying for her?"

Here Petrofsky comes along the hall to me and says: "I must take the liberty of putting the condemned man in your chamber, esteemed Miss Armstrong, where he can write his letter. After that is over, Genke directs me to give you a few moments to bid your fiancé good-bye. We all appreciate how madly you love him."

"How madly *I* love him? How about Sendai?" I whisper to myself savagely; for these idiot Russian officers hurt my pride—they think Sendai only came here to destroy the bridge and not because life was not worth living unless he saw my face!

Sweet Olga glides from her room, and putting her

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soft arms about me whispers, sadly: "Darling, I am so sorry that you love him." But I shake her off with a cry that she thinks is of horror, but it is of rage, and the bride, gazing at me sympathetically, returns to her husband.

They all believe I love the condemned Prince. Even Sophie Klinkofstrom, though she does not approach me, looks sneakingly at me from a distance as if she were sorry for me, yet didn't dare to voice it.

In some way, I think she must have had to do with Sendai's seizure, and now regrets it. Great powers! does she believe that I am enamored of the dying Japanese, and is therefore no longer jealous of me and Schevitch?

Meantime Petrofsky has gone back to the Colonel, who I hear in my parlor directing sternly: "Captain, the execution is under your direction. Remember you answer for the prisoner with your own life."

"I understand that!" replies the young officer stoutly. "There is no possible chance of his escape; a treble cordon of guards surround this house; double sentries will also be outside of the windows of the room, and two at the door. Besides, the prisoner is securely bound. No Japanese spy escapes me. But to make sure!"

With these words Petrofsky steps into my bedroom,

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and examines it thoroughly, returning to the hall by the door that leads from its big clothes-closet. Then I hear him report: "There is no exit from that room to the outside of the house but the windows, before each of which I have placed two special sentries."

A moment later Petrofsky returns along the hall from the room of the court-martial, followed by the "lazy-coolie" bearing pens, ink and writing paper. These under the Captain's orders he arranges on the table in my bedroom.

From this Petrofsky steps out and returns to his commanding officer, but somehow I think, as I stand at the far end of the hall looking on in a dazed way, the "lazy-coolie" has not followed him. This may not be true, however; my senses are too benumbed for very accurate observation.

The tramp of the additional sentries outside my window comes to me in the stillness of the night, for everyone in the house is very quiet now. I give a little sigh—there is no hope in this world for Sendai.

They have brought the prisoner along the passage-way and put him in my bedroom. The patrol outside, as well as rifles, carry torches that illuminate the grounds all about the house. Two sentries, their guns ready for immediate action, are standing in front of the door of my bedroom. Then I hear some

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hoarse commands about the provost-marshal preparing the noose down at the bridge and tremble so I can scarcely stand.

"You are thinking that your life is in danger," whispers Schevitch, noting my agitation and taking this opportunity to get close to me.

"No, I am thinking about Sendai's, whom they are going to murder down there because he loves me," I shudder.

"To save *your* life is now the important thing," says the Baron under his breath. He has drawn me to the extreme end of the passageway so that no one can overhear us. "Sophie saw you leave the house and followed you," he whispers. "She overheard your interview with the spy as he dug in his tunnel."

There is an intention in his tone which makes me turn my thoughts to myself.

"Fortunately, Madame Klinkofstrom came to me first with her story," observes Schevitch cautiously, "and though I am too good a Russian not to have sacrificed even *your* life to prevent the destruction of that bridge, I was able to invent a sufficiently plausible story, without implicating you too much, to place Genke on the alert and insure the immediate search of the gardens and the instant seizure and arrest of anyone attempting to mine the abutment. You noticed

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the chivalric Colonel, fearing you might put danger upon yourself by your evidence, stopped your mouth, and by closing the court-martial prevented any official record of your ravings. But if by any unfortunate accident, Sophie's evidence of your words of warning to Sendai, especially those in regard to Yaling, be given to Genke, notwithstanding you are an American, I fear for your life. Those mudstains on your pretty boots would be quite compromising."

The implied threat in his suave voice is so impressive that I gaze upon him startled. Perhaps my agitation adds to my beauty.

Schevitch looks at me as if he would devour me and his voice is low with passion as he continues, hoarsely: "You know how I have longed for your loveliness, how I have waited to be sure of winning it. Now, sweet Miss Armstrong, I will take a great risk—every risk—to save the woman who is to be my wife, but *for no one else!* Sophie's relations to me, I will simply tell you, are such that she dare not open her mouth, except with my permission."

There is an implied possession in his tone that makes me furious. "Oh, you think I will marry you to save my life!" I whisper indignantly. "But your ignoble threat makes me know I had better die, Baron Schevitch, than be your wife."

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"Be careful!" he commands.

"Be careful yourself!" I answer acutely. "Neither you nor Madame Klinkofstrom dare now say a word about me. You concealed the truth from Genke as well as I did. As Russians, your doom will be much more summary and severe than mine!" My voice has grown high with indignation.

"Hush, not so loud!" shudders Schevitch; "Petrofsky's coming."

I know by the Baron's perturbed manner that I've hit him in a vital spot. "Good-bye forever, Monsieur," I remark, with a haughty bow. My eyes blaze like a conqueror's as he turns away with a longing look at Hilda Armstrong, who will never be his.

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CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT MORE CAN MAN GIVE?

The next moment I droop with sorrowful sympathy as the Captain in charge of the execution stands before me and says: "The prisoner has finished his letter and has requested a few moments' interview with you, honored young lady. I need hardly say that it must be brief."

Of course, I cannot refuse to see Sendai.

So Petrofsky leads me into my own chamber where the Prince, who has ended his writing and has been bound again, is seated. On the table before him is a letter addressed to his father.

My room has not been disturbed, even a pair of dressing slippers I had carelessly kicked aside, as I made my evening toilet, are lying on the floor.

At Petrofsky's order, the two Russian soldiers take their station outside the door of the room, though the Captain bows and says: "I hope you will pardon me, but I must remain," but strolls to the other side of the apartment, directing his glance from us.

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Then, blushingly and covered with a supreme embarrassment, I turn agonized eyes on the face of the man who is dying because he loves me, and Sendai startles me by these astounding words: "Honored Miss Armstrong, your self-sacrificing revelations to the court-martial have placed a duty upon me. To prevent your name being unpleasantly commented upon from your evidence, so nobly offered to save me from death, I think it wise that you accept my name to protect you."

I give a startled cry.

"Oh, you need not tremble so!" he half laughs. "I shall be dead in fifteen minutes. But wedded to me, no slur can come upon your fair fame. In my country it would not matter, but in Connecticut!" He shrugs his bound shoulders. "If you will honor me by becoming my wife, I shall die the happier because I will know that no scandalous gossip, such as is current in your country, can arise when your generous attempt to aid me is mentioned in American society."

A thousand conflicting emotions are in my soul; the noble forethought of the dying man touches me deeply. I gaze upon him gratefully. Deified by approaching death, the features of Prince Sendai are sublime in self restraint. Something that has never

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come into my heart in regard to this man who thinks of me, even in dissolution, seems to develop there now. Besides, his marrying me will prove that he came here at risk of death for love of me; that my words were not mad ravings! Johnny Bristow will know "that fool Armstrong girl," who thinks every man is in love with her, was right in regard to one man.

Pinkie Caldwell, in Tokyo, will at last believe in Sendai's devotion to me. In addition, marriage will stop Dad's mouth when he hears about this deplorable affair. He couldn't say unkind things to a *widow*. Besides, a Japanese Princess! I see in imagination in the papers: "The widowed Princess Sendai returns to America—" Oh, God forgive me for such an ignoble idea when he is going to die in fifteen minutes! But by Heaven, if it will make his last few moments happier to know that I bear his name, I'll marry him!

"Okashi, your wishes shall be regarded," I say falteringly, then I force myself to step to Captain Petrofsky, and stammer: "Prince Sendai and I wish to be mar—married."

The Russian officer gazes at me startled. But my red face tells him he has heard correctly.

"For that I must have my commander's consent,"

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he replies courteously; and not leaving the room, sends a soldier to beg his Colonel's presence.

Genke comes briskly in and looks at us both quite sadly as Okashi says, in his soft, melodious, measured voice: "One last favor, Captain, to a dying man. Permit this lady to become my wife. I have fair estates in Japan that should be those of a woman who has risked so much for me. Besides, she wishes it."

"Do you?" the veteran asks curtly as he turns to me.

Something in my throat prevents my speaking, but I nod my head.

"Humph, you want to become his widow," growls Genke; then queries dubiously: "But the ceremony?"

"Oh, let the Russian priest who came to offer me the consolations of his Church say a few words over us. He's in the house now," responds Sendai. "The marriage laws of Dai Nippon are liberal. Any wedding legal in a foreign country is legal there. Besides, in Japan we practically have no ceremony. The bride simply drinks three flagons of wine with her husband and goes to live in his house. Apropos of that, I must say a word to you in private, Colonel."

Genke bends down over the bound man and the Japanese officer whispers a sentence or two in his ear.

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"Oh, yes, of course," Genke bursts into a hoarse laugh. "As I understand you, it is necessary that you should spend ten minutes entirely alone with the bride to give the ceremony complete effect."

"Yes," answers Sendai shortly. My face is red as vermilion as I hear the words. "It is only a form," whispers the Prince to me. "I shall be bound and helpless in the presence of my bride."

My head buzzes so I can scarcely see. If Sendai were not going to die I would not marry him. But now—what does it matter?

Then the Russian priest is brought in and says the words of marriage over us. I do not understand them, but I know I have become the wife of a dying man—that is all.

With a courteous bow the Russian officers, who have stood throughout the ceremony, turn to leave husband and wife together, though Genke looks at his watch and says significantly: "Only ten minutes, Sendai. I shall hang you at midnight."

"I understand," whispers my husband.

"Of course, I have your parole, Prince, if we accord you the ten minutes' tête-à-téte with your bride," demands the military martinet.

"Certainly!" answers the dying man. "You have my word, rescue or no rescue, till twelve o'clock. I

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suppose that will be sufficient," he half laughs. Oh, how can this man jest when he is going to lose me in ten brief minutes!

"*Diable,* that will be long enough!" mutters the Colonel grimly, as he and Petrofsky leave the room, closing the door behind them. We are alone together!

But I hear Petrofsky order the sentries to keep their eyes wide open, and though the blinds are drawn, the measured tread of the patrol on the portico outside tells of alert and watchful guards.

I gaze piteously upon the dying man, whose military pledge now binds him to death. Seated before me bound and helpless, the Prince says breezily, a little smile rippling his pale face: "Hilda, just put that cigar between my lips and light it for me, little woman."

His careless husband's words, American fashion, bring the tears into my eyes as with trembling hands I do his bidding.

Seeing that I am agitated to the verge of hysteria, the Prince's manner loses its formality. Apparently anxious to give me courage, he continues easily: "Now, wife, cheer up and sit beside me. Let my last words be to thank you for the nobility of your attempted sacrifice to me. I perfectly understand American customs and knew that you did not consider corres-

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pondence with me an engagement." Sendai's voice is as calm as if he were in a Tokyo tea-house. "The only request I have to make you, is that you will deliver this letter," he nods towards the one on the table, "to my father and mother in Japan. In it I bid them to accord all honor and consideration to my widow. They will treat you as if you were a daughter of our house, for their son's sake."

I sink down half sobbing by his side. Then his lips hardly move as they breathe into my ear, scarce audible words: "As you love your life, never whisper as long as you are in Russian territory of the letter you sent me to Japan giving the date of Admiral Stark's saint's-day fete," and listening to him I know that my epistle brought disaster upon the Russian fleet.

But I forget my own peril in thinking of Sendai's coming death. I can scarce restrain my screams. It is weird, uncanny, monstrous to see a man in the full vigor of life, yet to know that in ten short minutes those bright eyes will shine no more and those red lips that speak in such distinct soft phrases will be forever silent.

As I look on Sendai, the majesty of the dead seems to ennoble and enshrine him—my dying husband. I remember how his grand love for me has brought

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him to ignoble death. Something that has never been there before comes into my heart and I put my lips upon his broad pale forehead begrimed by coolie dirt and shudder: "If I could but save you!"

As if in answer to my words, from the large clothes-closet that also connects with the hall glides into us a *second* Prince Sendai.

I start up and would shriek in astonishment, but my tongue seems paralyzed.

Bowing before the bound Prince with the stilted grace of the *samurai* is the actor of the Kabukiza Theatre, looking like the ghost when I first saw him on the day of the Tokyo water fete, save that he is in begrimed coolie garments and has his pigtail torn from his head as the true Sendai's had been when seized by the Russians.

The two are counterparts!

The prisoner's eyes almost start from his head. "Kiguro!" he ejaculates; then mutters, struggling with his bonds: "No, no, I know what sacrifice you mean! I forbid you!"

But the other whispers: "Your life is more valuable to Dai Nippon than mine. Besides, this is what I swore by all the gods to do when I left Japan with you, should *Ema* make it necessary, Prince and Daimio!"*

* Ema is the Japanese deity of Misfortune.—EDITOR.

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"By *Izanagi*, I'll not take your sacrifice!" snarls the Prince. "I command you not!" His muscles writhe as he struggles to free his corded wrists.

But the false Sendai, holding his helpless master's face tight between his hands, forces between the lips of the real Sendai some high-smelling aromatic drug and compels him to swallow it. The prisoner struggles till the muscles of his athletic neck stand out like whipcords—but down it goes!

Then Kiguro bowing before his master, says apologetically: "Forgive me, Daimio, it was my only chance to make you accept my sacrifice. There is no egress from the house. One of us must pass to the shades and it is I, your *samurai*."

The measured tramp of the patrol and sentries outside proclaims the truth of the devoted fellow's words.

"You have given me what will take my senses from me?" whispers the Prince, a kind of horror rippling his sad features.

"Yes, in a minute or two, most honored Daimio, you will be in dreamland. From it you will awake with chance of safety from your foes, but I will be where the *kami* place me. Your glorious talents are more valuable to Dai Nippon in her need than those of a poor actor who loves you—who dies for you."

Oh, the heroic devotion of that *samurai* face!

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Appalled, I, looking upon them, say nothing, though I am sighing, shivering and trembling. The drug must be some weird preparation of opium; it acts so quickly. Already the Prince feels it.

"By *Ema,* my parole!" gasps the real Sendai, and strains at the cords that bind him till the muscles of his arms knot themselves and twist like writhing snakes.

But the false Sendai pressing the helpless Prince's lips, whispers: "If you summon your enemies, it means both your death and mine, honored Master!"

"By the God of Truth, I have given my word! My military honor!" falters the Prince, his breath growing more labored. *"Besides, you expect me to die!"* The pupils of his contracting eyes turn towards me, though I can scarce catch his whispered orders: "Save your husband from dishonor. Wife, call the guard! Obey me!" His low moan has in it the command of an Eastern husband.

And yet I am letting him live, perchance to dominate my life. I have but to cry out to the sentries and I am free from Sendai—a widowed princess—rich in my own right! Should he live I am a Japanese wife.

But I hold my lips. To summon the Russians would be to kill two brave men instead of one.

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Suddenly the real Sendai looks into the false Sendai's eyes and mutters with such feeble breath I can scarce hear him: You are going to die for me, my Ronin. *Sayonara,* bravest of the brave," and the daimio, with two long drawn out sighs, as if struggling with the drug, goes to sleep upon his *samurai's* shoulder.

As the true Sendai's head droops—ah, the feudal devotion that is in Kiguro's blazing eyes!—just for one moment the actor of the Kabukiza Theatre fondles the Prince's inert form as a dying dog licks his master's hand, and murmurs: "Good-bye, my Daimio!" then becomes a creature of vivid, energetic action. He unbinds the real Sendai and quickly but reverently carries him to my big closet and closes the door upon him. Standing before me, he says: "Quick, assist me to bind myself for death!"

But seeing that my agitation makes my fingers nearly inert, he with wondrous agility puts his hands behind his back and contrives to twist the cords about his wrists; then commands: "Tie them; tie them, honored Princess! Tie these knots if you would be my master's bride, otherwise it will be death to all of us!"

So I contrive, with trembling fingers, to make the knots that secure the martyr's hands. Then he sinks

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back on the chair and says in easy tone: "Put that cigar between my teeth and I am Prince Sendai, honored Princess. Don't fear, I shall die bravely enough not to dishonor my fearless master."

I do his asking. As he sits smoking calmly into my face, such is his wondrous disguise, that, did I not know the true Sendai were in yonder closet, I would be sure my husband were sitting with corded arms before me.

Suddenly he whispers: "When Yaling comes, show him," and nods reverently towards the closet door behind which lies the swooning form of his master and my husband. I shudder and bow my head.

"A good make-up?" whispers Kiguro, the actor's vanity rising in him even as he chants in the weird tones of the theatre his *samurai* death song.

"Yes," I falter; then suddenly suggest: "But you have no red compass on your arm."

"Pull up my sleeve and look! See, I am perfect in my role, that of the ghost of the Sendai!" he whispers, and chuckles: "At last the ghost can play a death scene." My blood runs cold at his awful jest.

"And now," for there is a movement in the guard and Petrofsky has given a warning knock upon the door, "now, show the affection of a wife for a dying

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mate," he whispers. "It is all you can do for Sendai's safety."

Petrofsky has entered, a detail of men at his back. The Russian officer says hoarsely to conceal his emotion: "Your time has come, Prince Sendai."

The smile of the comedian ripples the features of the false Sendai, as they lift him to his feet to take him to his death.

Then I try to do my wife's part and place my burning lips upon the cold forehead of the bravest man upon this earth. The dying eyes look into mine, the dying tongue whispers in my ear: "Tell him I love him."

Then walking as haughtily as ever he stepped on the flower paths of the Kabukiza Theatre, with applauding audience about him, the actor, in face, deportment and bearing the image of Prince Sendai, strides between his guards to death.

In the hall an additional detail of men await the prisoner. At the door stands Schevitch. He has heard of my nuptials and gazes at his supposed rival, his face flushed with rage. "You didn't have your bride very long!" he laughs maliciously to the dying man. Then some innate suspicion—I know not what—seems to flit through the Russian's acute mind. The lamps in the hall are burning brightly. He

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glances at the prisoner's corded wrist and seeing the red tattooed compass smiles complacently.

At the entrance of the house, the full provost-guard gather about the condemned, torches in their hands. I hear Genke give a hoarse command, and down the path they go, the torches gleaming, followed by all the troops about the house. They've got their victim. There's no prisoner within my walls to guard now!

"Madame la Princesse"—I start at the title—"I return your house to you once more." Genke is speaking to me. "I pray God never, in my career, to encounter such a cruel duty again. I bid you adieu. I presume you will never wish to see me more—a woman, by the inflexible laws of war, I have widowed!" The gallant Russian officer bows to the ground before me.

Widowed? I have but to point to the insensible form behind that closet door and I *am* widowed! But if I let Sendai live, I am his Eastern wife to do his bidding. I know Dad will tell me to sleep in the bed I have made." But I only answer the Colonel by a hysterical laugh.

Then Genke departs from me, and I see his erect military figure moving down the path following his troops, whose torches are already clustering about the bridge.

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All my Chinese servants have run out into the grounds to look upon the execution. Schevitch and Sophie have gone partly down the garden, conversing earnestly together in frightened tones. In a far away chamber, Jack's bride is half swooning in his arms at the awful military catastrophe that has saddened their wedding eve. I am alone in my house, half crazy, half swooning.

As the clock strikes twelve, there is a pistol shot down by the bridge. I start, tremble and cry. It is the signal, and I know that as brave a soul as ever breathed has given up his life in that strange feudal *samurai* devotion.

Shall his sacrifice be for naught? No!

From the back of the house nearest the hills there glides through my vacant rooms Yaling, followed by six or seven brawny, well-armed Mongolians that I guess are the wild Hun-hu-tzes who war upon the Russians.

"Have no fear, Missie Melican," whispers the old Chinese magistrate. Then he asks me sharply: "Where you put him? One thousand taels, get him away."

I point to the closet!

As they pick up the swooning form of Sendai, I say hurriedly: "Yaling, when he gets his senses, don't

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fail to tell him that he was not removed from this chamber till his parole had expired—after twelve o'clock. You sabe—*after* twelve o'clock!" For I have some wild fears that my husband may think himself bound by his word to his Russian captors.

As the athletic Chinese carry Sendai's form out into the darkness of the night and take a pathway leading to the hills, I gaze after them and jeer myself: "My husband!"

Then to me comes Schevitch, who apparently won't take no for an answer. He observes, almost brutally: "Now, Madame, there is nothing to prevent your listening to my suit."

"What, I, a Japanese Princess, wed a humble Russian Baron?" I sneer hysterically, but haughtily.

"There is naught to prevent it now that you are widowed!' he suggests in his usual suave tones.

Widowed! Am I widowed? Will Sendai escape? I give a wild, half crazy cry. Jack Bristow and Olga are bending over me, the American shuddering: "This has been too much for the poor girl! Wedded and widowed within a quarter of an hour!"

"My God, how she loved him!" sobs dear Olga, as she tries to soothe me.

"My God, how he loved *me!*" I scream. "A Jap-

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anese bride! And he promised to die in fifteen minutes!"

They all gaze at me as if I were demented!

Then something seems to break in my head and that's the last I know.

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EPISODE THE FOURTH.

A WIDOW'S HONEYMOON.

CHAPTER IX.

A BRIDE, OR NOT A BRIDE?

They have put me in black!

But I hardly appreciated my widow's weeds till I reached Niuchwang, where Dad took me as soon as I was able to travel.

Papa's awfully incensed at me. He had a frightful time with the Russian authorities on my account. In some way they discovered that I had held communication with Sendai as he worked in the trench to mine the railroad bridge. Over this, the Muscovites made a terrible hubbub.

Schevitch is in disgrace also, for not telling Genke everything, even if it did get me strung up. But the Baron will soon be reinstated in the Viceroy's favor. He is too astute and cunning to remain in a hole very long, and is, I imagine, very useful to Alex-

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eieff in smaller private matters. Trust the Baron to turn up smiling!

But, wheugh! Poor Sophie was the unfortunate one! Women generally catch it in the East; men in the West. I imagine, however, that the Baron was her undoing. He had become tired of Madame Klinkofstrom's jealousy and engineered her little journey to Siberia. However, nowadays pretty women are always considerately treated, even in Siberian dungeons. Dad says a number of years ago he saw the governor of Saghalien driving about Vladivostok with his prettiest female prisoner. Technically, she was in close confinement, but she had the best rooms in the Vladivostok Hotel, wore good-sized diamonds, presumably the gift of her jailor, and couldn't have been driven from her dungeon by a file of soldiers.

The dungeon suggests my affair. There was some talk in Russian official circles of imprisoning me. The Russians had become so enraged at their victorious enemies that they were not disposed to be as considerate to a Japanese widow as they had been to an Americansky girl. However, Dad bluffed them out, threatening them with Secretary Hay and all kinds of horrible things! So they finally forced upon him my passports and told him to get me out of the coun-

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try as soon as he possibly could—which he is now doing.

I have not dared to tell Papa that I don't know whether I am wife or widow. He has the letter that poor Sendai wrote to the aged Prince and Princess. He has in his pocketbook a signed statement from the Russian officers who witnessed the ceremony, and the certificate of my marriage from the Russian priest who performed it. I know from Father's business-like manner that he is going to make a big claim on the Sendai estates in behalf of Sendai's young widow. These proofs that I am Sendai's widow impress me with the fact that I am Sendai's wife, *if he is alive.*

I wonder if he did escape with Yaling and his Hun-hu-tzes. No man when he recovered his senses would be better equipped to slide out of the country as a plain, honest Chinese coolie than my lord and master.

Lord and master! I tremble at these words. If the Prince is living I am a Japanese wife. His last words before insensibility struck him were commands that I did not obey, and I know, if Sendai turns up, Dad will hand me over with his compliments to my husband and say: "Take care of her now. The responsibility is too great for yours truly."

From the sprightly nature of my reflections I conclude that I am regaining my spirits. Anyway, I am

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determined to dress in bright colors as soon as we leave Russian territory, unless black is more becoming. San Shoo says my widow's weeds "Suitee 'Melican missie down to the glound." Besides, men are so much more attentive to young rich widows than they are even to opulent buds. Papas sometimes hold close purse-strings.

At Niuchwang we overtake Johnny Bristow and his bride. They have been trying to make a honeymoon here, but the town is so much excited by rumors of attack from the Japanese and the movements of Russian troops that Jack says he needs a quieter place for conjugal retirement.

However, Olga declares she would be happy with him anywhere. Her successful marriage makes the dear girl very sympathetic with my widowhood. "Poor thing," she whispers to me, "how you must suffer when you think that you will never see your husband again, the one you loved so devotedly."

"The one who loved me so devotedly!" I reply rather testily. I get angry with people thinking that the love is on my side, not on Sendai's. They all talk of his heroic disregard of his life, coming into the midst of his enemies to destroy that bridge. If he did, it was but a secondary consideration in his mind.

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Even Papa growls: "Sendai had no business coming near our bungalow to put such peril on you."

But I say: "As we were not at our country place, the Prince concluded he could put no danger on us. But arriving at our bungalow and not finding me there, in his desperation to kill time he went to work on the Russian bridge—that's all! His only thought after he was seized was marrying me and giving me his name. In the shadow of death it was my safety—not his. My husband is the noblest man alive."

"*Alive!*" cries Father. "You're crazy! I saw his body hanging up to the railway bridge as we left; not a pleasant sight, either."

I shudder and the tears fly into my eyes as I think of the noble martyr who took my husband's place.

Noting this, Dad mutters contritely: "Forgive me, my poor child; I see you're grieving for Sendai now. The Prince was a hummer as a mathematician anyway, and the ramjammest engineer that ever designed a structure."

Father always looks at the practical side of everything. He is very savage because the Russians used their hold upon him through me to shave the payments on some of their railroad contracts. However, he'll see Secretary Hay about that.

But all that agitates my buzzing brain is what my

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fate will be if Sendai is living—a Japanese wife, shut up in semi-regal state in a *Daimio* castle, perhaps. When I think of this I wonder why I did not hold my husband to his promise to die in fifteen minutes and open my mouth and let his Russian guards know they were hanging the wrong man. Anyway, there's no chance of meeting Prince Sendai in Niuchwang, with the Russian troops all about me.

But Papa has promised the Czar's officials to get me out of the country as quickly as possible. So we —that is, Jack Bristow, his wife, Dad and I—are all going to take the railroad round by Kin-chow and Chin-wang-tao to Tien-Tsin. These Chinese names give me a headache. From there we shall journey by steamer to Japan, where Dad will make the claim of the widowed Princess in proper form. He tells me that he has already obtained the address of the best legal Jap firm in Tokyo.

This immediate business treatment of a matter that lies heavy on my heart angers me. To him I say, indignantly: "This letter, Papa, that you carry will bring me everything that is my due. The dying man thought of me in his last moments." The "dying man" chokes me; I emit a miserable giggle.

Dad looks at me curiously, and asks savagely: "What are you snickering about? You were high-

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falutin enough before this fracas, but since you've been a wife for fifteen minutes, hang me if you ain't daffy, girl!"

Sometimes I cannot repress a smile when they talk of Sendai's being dead—if he is alive, it seems such a huge joke on me.

I don't think I will put off mourning, certainly not till I see Sendai; Russian sables are very effective with black. Therefore, I keep my secret to myself as we run along the railroad and get into China proper. Away from Russian rule I take the padlock off my tongue; it is such a pleasure not to have to think before you speak on politics.

"Oh, ain't I glad," I whisper to our party in the railroad car, "that I can now utter my views of those tyrants, without you, Dad, shaking your head at me, and putting your finger on my lips. Wait till *our* army gets to Manchuria!"

"Why, the Russians treated you very well," remarks my father, "perhaps better than you deserved."

"What! because they didn't hang me on account of the adoration of my Japanese Prince? Why should I keep my tongue still? Haven't I a right to speak when I'm the wife of a Japanese officer?"

At my suggestion of wifehood Papa dashes a tear from his eye and looks sorrowfully out of the window,

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and Jack gazing at Olga taps his forehead suggestive of wheels in my brain; while his bride gives me a pathetic kiss. I'd like to tell them, but I'd better not till I'm sure Sendai has escaped.

Finally, we reach a little warmer weather at Tien-Tsin. There we take an English steamboat to Chefoo. Here possibly Sendai may have arrived. Under the British flag he is perfectly safe.

But though I keep my eyes open about the Foreign quarter and hotels, I see him not.

About this time I commence to thoroughly appreciate what a very great lady I have become. The Princess Sendai—why, it's almost next to royalty! There are less than a dozen princes in all Japan, and he's one of the very biggest of them, connected with the old *Shoguns,* the former military dictators of the empire.

"The Princess Sendai!" I hear the English merchants say, as I pass; "Yes, the one dressed in deep mourning, the *widowed* Princess of Sendai."

Before I had only been called "That Armstrong girl."

Then my romantically cruel story being buzzed about, my heart beats triumphantly as at last the world believes that Sendai loved me, for the report is that in his last moments all he asked of his Russian

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captors was a quarter of an hour to wed the woman he adored.

"By Jove, she was worth it!" I catch in the bluff voice of Billy Cranston of the Shanghai Bank. "She'll be the handsomest widow in Japan." I giggle as I hear Papa say in muffled accents to his commercial friends: "My poor son-in-law, the *late* Prince Sendai."

Then a new complication comes in my mind. If I discard Sendai, they'll perhaps think he didn't love me! No, no, if the Prince is alive, I'm in for it. Besides, I don't mind much. `No more aristocratic features or soul-stirring eyes ever looked upon a bride than those of my dying husband as they dazed upon me, and no braver man, save, perhaps, he who took his place, ever made love to a woman. Did he make love to me? Japanese never caress in our American way. Of course, he never kissed me. How do the Japanese make love? If Sendai is alive, I presume I shall discover some day.

We have taken a British steamer for Nagasaki, but our skipper, whose big deck cabins Papa and I have engaged for the voyage, knowing the Russians are bottled up in Port Arthur, says en route he is going to drop into Chemulpo, now practically a Japanese port.

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Leaving Che-foo early in the day, we plough across the Yellow Sea. That evening as Papa and I pace the steamer's deck, I try to tell him that I am possibly not a widow, but remembering his remarks about American women marrying American men, I don't have the courage to suggest to him he may have a living Jap for a son-in-law.

The next morning bright and early we are in Chemulpo. Dressed in deepest mourning, with my handsome Russian sables all about me, I gaze from the deck and see the hull of the destroyed *Variag*, its guns pointing in the air and a wrecking crew on board of it.

The harbor is full of Japanese transports, landing, by means of sampans towed by steam launches, some regiments of dogged, wiry Osaka infantry. They have already built temporary wharves, and by means of big lighters are transporting to the shore some field batteries and heavy artillery. The Rising Sun flag is flying over a town busy as a beehive in methodical, Japanese, energetic way. Three or four of Uriu's cruisers are in the harbor, and one or two dispatch and torpedo boats are patrolling the offing.

Standing behind me is Ah Tow, who whispers: "Missie, tell you 'bout Russian *Variag* vessel being sunk; you sabe, up Polandien way?"

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"Yes," I answer with a shudder, as I remember the events of the awful evening at my cottage by the bridge.

My agitation is such that even the Chinaman sympathizes with me. Looking at my mourning, he mutters: "Poor little widdie woman, bleak 'em heart;" but adds, reassuringly: "'Melican husband klum by an' bye!"

"Shut your infernal Chinese mouth!" says Dad, savagely, to his factotum, for "'Melican husband" has put a very wild look into my eyes.

A lot of sampans, shore boats, steam launches and all that kind of thing cluster beside us as we drop anchor and put over our side ladder.

Upon this scene I gaze, an eager flush upon my face. Here I should have tidings of Sendai—if he has escaped. But no approaching barque carries the form for which I strain my eyes.

Throughout the day I gaze over the harbor; no Sendai makes his appearance.

I inspect all shore boats connected with the Japanese Army with such alert anxiety that Dad, mistaking my vivacity, whispers to me rather severely: "One would think, daughter, that your recent experience would make you at least decently solemn when confronted with Japanese uniforms. True, you didn't

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love the gentleman who gave to you his name and title to prevent any scandal that might have been caused by his extraordinary visit to your bungalow." Then I hear Papa sigh over the Prince's memory, not on account of his title, I think, but on account of his engineering ability. "Sendai was a remarkable man," he mutters, "and the finest mathematical cuss I ever encountered. Besides, as his widow you will doubtless get some very pretty estates in Japan."

"I am not thinking of those, Father," I say, "and I'm serious enough about the whole business, though I am nervous and excited."

I don't care to tell Papa of my reasons for investigating every off-coming boat from Chemulpo. If Sendai does put in an appearance, it will be time enough. Besides, I doubt whether Father would believe on my mere word the extraordinary story of the actor's wondrous make-up to represent the man about to die and his devoted substitution for his *Daimio*. As I related the tale, I expect Papa would gasp that I was crazy, especially as he believes that he saw Sendai's dead body hanging from that miserable Russian bridge he lost his life trying to blow up.

Once or twice, however, I reflect that nothing has been heard of my husband and fear the great self-sacrifice of the devoted Kiguro has been for naught

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and the gallant Prince may be dead—betrayed perhaps by the Chinese to save their own miserable bodies, if in danger of capture by the Russian patrol parties, or mounted Cossacks who scour all Manchuria.

I would go on shore to inquire for news of Sendai, but Dad does not think it wise for me to visit this town full of an army in process of movement on the enemy. I would even send a telegram to Seoul, but that would compel embarrassing explanations; so I keep my vigil by the ship's rail, fibbing to Papa and saying that the activity in the harbor makes it so picturesquely exciting that I prefer the water-view to tiffin.

Soon after, Dad, hearing that the Japanese intend to push their Korean railroad, jumps into a steam launch and goes on shore to see the military authorities as to bridge contracts. Therefore I recline in a steamer chair, surrounded by a group of gentlemen passengers, not far from the gangway, and accept some sandwiches that the faithful San Shoo brings her "missie," though in truth I have but little appetite. Even Sammy Debrow—one of the managers of the American Trading Company at Yokohama, who is returning to that place from a business visit to Chefoo and who seems to have taken a particular fancy to my widow's weeds—cannot raise my spirits,

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notwithstanding he insists upon having a bottle of champagne opened to "brisk me up a little," as he remarks. But though Sammy would be very sociable —perhaps more than sociable if I would permit him —and is a remarkably handsome fellow and doesn't like Colonel Ponsomby, the blondly grizzled British attaché at the Pekin Legation who is on board, going over to Tokyo on some diplomatic affair and who has made himself an attendant upon Madame la Princesse, I languidly refuse Sammy's champagne and gaze eagerly over the water with my marine glass; for a shore boat is coming up to our side ladder.

On its arrival, it produces nothing but Colonel Ponsomby, who has been in Chemulpo and strides eagerly to me to give me the news of the town.

Ponsomby, in answer to my earnest though veiled inquiries as to news, says in his British manner: "There is nothing, my dear Princess, except that the Japs are in full possession of Seoul, the Korean capital, and apparently by the number of regiments they are putting on shore, intend to hold it despite the Russians."

"No other small details?" I ask anxiously.

"Why no, nothing particular, though, by the bye, I suppose, Princess, you are always interested in the exploits of Japanese heroes." Glancing at my weeds,

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the Colonel assumes a sympathetic tone. "There is a report that another Japanese bridge destroyer, some gallant fellow in the Engineers, has escaped from Manchuria and arrived after untold hardships within the Japanese lines. But—but pardon me," he stammers, "Madame la Princesse, I—I had forgotten—"

For a sudden inspiration tells me it is Sendai, my husband—*alive!* I have been standing by my steamer chair. As I reflect: "What does this mean for me?" into it I nearly collapse.

Then I discover what a *grande dame* I have become. Even the Captain springs from the bridge to my assistance; half of the male passengers rush to my aid, and a contingent of the ship's stewards fly from the cabin with ice water, brandy, fans and other restoratives. At the best moments of my former life "that Armstrong girl" could have fainted half a dozen times without producing a moiety of the commotion that Madame la Princesse Sendai's nervous attack calls forth.

As I recline in the steamer chair in a dazed way, I hear the skipper remonstrating with the English Colonel: "Ponsomby, have you forgotten that Her Highness has lately lost a gallant husband under similar circumstances, and the sweet young lady has not yet recovered from the atrocious blow?"

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"Her Highness" sounds very nicely to my ears, as they fan me.

Suddenly, to the astonishment of them all, as they proffer me ice water and brandy and the Colonel offers his arm to assist me to my stateroom, I become almost my old vivacious self. An extraordinary excitement thrills my nerve centers; a strange hope elates me. Why is the blood running through my veins? Why is my heart beating so wildly that my face is covered with wave after wave of blushes? In my maiden state I had never loved Sendai. Is it because that Sendai's wife—No, no, that cannot be! And yet, good Heavens, *if* he is alive!

The thought that I have a living husband makes my manner quite distant to my English escort, who is assisting me to my cabin and whispering words of exceedingly tender sympathy. To the Colonel's eager inquiries as to how I feel, I astonish him by remarking: "So much better I can walk even without the support of your arm. Though, thank you very much for your kindness. After a little I shall be entirely recovered and will venture upon deck again."

Noting something curious in my eyes, Ponsomby thinks it is for him, and, standing at the door of my big deck stateroom, says, taking off his hat: "I shall await your return, Princess, with the greatest eager-

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ness. The lights of the—awh—harbor will be very beautiful this evening as we leave it, and I believe there will be also enough moonlight for—awh—practical purposes."

As I close the door of my cabin, I know the Colonel has an idea that I shall enjoy the moonlight with him!

As soon as I am alone the contemplation of my situation nearly makes me faint again. Sendai perhaps *alive!* I grow so nervous over the matter that I have to lie down upon the sofa. San Shoo comes in to me and applies restoratives. After a time I conquer my nerves and become a being of action. I must immediately discover who the escaped officer is. Dad has gone on shore. He will return, perhaps, with further news of the occurrence.

But my nervous collapse in my stateroom has stolen a couple of precious hours from me. When I return to the deck I find Papa awaiting me, but darkness is coming on and the vessel under way.

To my very guarded questions, in which I seek to extract any shore news he may have picked up, my father merely remarks: "I think I have nailed the Japanese commander-in-chief at Seoul by telegraph for a contract. They are going to build a railway right up to the Yalu River."

"No other things?" I question. "Nothing about

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any engineer officers escaping from Russian lines?"

"Why, yes, I heard in the quartermaster's office ashore that there was a fellow disguised as a coolie, I believe, who came from Elliott Island in a junk, but heroism is so common in the Japanese Army that I only picked up a passing remark about it. The reckless chap was not successful, I believe, in blowing up the bridge he had selected, and only escaped by the very hair of his head, aided by Chinese sympathizers."

This tallies with the story that would come with Sendai, and puts wild excitement within me.

"Didn't any Japanese officers take passage from Chemulpo?" I ask, eagerly.

"None that I saw, though there was a boat at the side ladder a minute or two before we came up. Perhaps it contained some of our returning passengers; a whole bunch of 'em went on shore in Chemulpo. But my daughter looks in better spirits than when I left," Papa says cheerfully. "That's the talk, my girl, forget the past. Put it behind you. Think only of the future. That's the common-sense way for even young widows. The whole affair didn't amount to anything, anyway, except to give you a name and a title. For God's sake, forget all about it, Hilda!" he commands, for tears have risen to my

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eyes. Why I cry I don't know. As a girl I had very good nerves.

"You are quite right, Dad," I falter; "I'm glad the vessel is passing out of the harbor—I'll think no more about it." Father lights a cigar and goes into his cabin, probably to figure on railroad material for Korea.

Two minutes after I have got hold of the fourth officer, who was in charge of the gangway most of the time we were at anchor, and am asking him: "Did any Japanese officers come on board in Chemulpo?"

"Why, yes, two or three, Your—Your Highness," stammers the young sea-dog. He isn't accustomed to addressing princesses. "A couple of artillery chaps and a companion dressed in mufti. He must be a civilian. Jap officers always wear their uniforms."

"Yes, but he mightn't have had any uniform to wear," I suggest; then astound the British sea-dog by asking: "Did they make any inquiries about—about *me?*"

"Why, no," he says. "All they were concerned about was that they couldn't get any berths in the cabin and were compelled to take the best accommodation they could procure forward. You know we are crowded to the gunwale. They'll eat in the cabin, I presume. They didn't make much of a kick; those fellows are

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contented with a hard plank if it'll help 'em beat the Russies."

Dinner has been off the table half an hour. There will be little chance of seeing these Japanese in the cabin. They may be enjoying a cigar forward. The night is fine. The fourth officer is off duty. As the vessel is in motion and pitching slightly as she meets the waves of the Yellow Sea, I ask for the assistance of his arm during a turn on deck. That stalwart young Briton accords it to me.

When we have gone as far forward as cabin passengers usually go, I suggest that I am tired and would like to sit down. The mate brings deferentially a steamer chair, makes me comfortable, and goes off to other duties.

I have had my seat deftly placed between two ventilating funnels and am protected from ordinary observation by an extra big wind-sail that is employed to carry air into the lower berths of the steerage. Here perchance I may see the Japanese officers pacing the forward deck and enjoying their cigars. If I do, I shall contrive to question them about their escaping comrade, and learn if they know his name. The evening is quite dark, though the moon will be up soon. After a few minutes I note dimly among the crowd on deck two figures in the military uniform

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of Japan smoking cheroots and chatting pleasantly together.

As they approach me I rack my mind for some pretext to call their attention to me so that I may question them. Suddenly my heart gives a great bound and then almost ceases to beat. A footfall that seems familiar is behind the wind-sail; another voice is speaking to them in English. The voice I recognize. It is that of my husband, thank God—I am so happy that I can say it—thank God, *alive!*

I am about to spring up and run to him and proclaim myself when his words stay me and rivet me to the spot. "Speak English, esteemed Kanecko," he remarks, "so that none of this coolie crowd can understand. Have you quietly ascertained if the report is true that my wife is on board?"

"She is, honored Prince," answers the addressed Japanese officer in very good English.

And the third rather laughs: "A lucky coincidence for you, most worthy Okashi. Instead of a hammock in the steerage, you will now have a state cabin. The Princess Sendai has the finest on the ship. You are in luxury, Your Highness, after living on nothing but bean-cake for a month. Besides, what a joyful surprise it will be to the lady, who, I am told, thinks herself your widow."

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"Yes, she—she has a right to believe herself my widow!" answers Sendai, in so sad a voice it shocks me. "My wife being on board is an unexpected embarrassment to me. I—I don't contemplate meeting the Princess Sendai, and am glad that as a steerage passenger the ship's purser didn't take the trouble to register my name. During this voyage I shall remain incognito."

"Incognito?" ejaculates one of the Japanese officers; and the other remarks: "Excuse me suggesting that your wife should know you are alive."

"Ah, that is my dilemma!" mutters Sendai. "That's the reason I ask that you keep my secret and that of a most esteemed and honored lady who risked her reputation in an absurd yet most generous attempt to save my life."

As the Prince speaks so enthusiastically about me my heart gives a big throb. But the other Japanese officer rejoins: "Oh, we've heard that story! It's all over Chemulpo as well as Seoul, and I presume is now the chat of Tokyo."

"Then since you have heard it, you know my delicate position to my—my wife," remarks the Prince. "I do not wish her to think that my presence on board is an attempt to foist myself upon her. I shall eat in the steerage. A few days of hard-tack and salt

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junk will be luxury to one who has lived for a month among the vermin of a Manchurian hut. Believe me, I only ask the silence of your tongues in order that I may keep a very sacred obligation."

"Then you are not going near the very beautiful lady who thinks herself your widow? You, her bridegroom, acknowledging she is your wife, and yet letting her believe you dead, you cold-blooded mathematician!" This is in the voice of the officer called Kanecko.

"Dead—that's what she has a right to think me," observes the Prince. "So, gentlemen, I expect you to respect my incognito." Sendai's voice is so commanding in its sadness that it compels his companions' almost immediate assent.

After a little the two officers leave my husband, and I think I hear a sigh from the other side of the wind-sail, mingled with a muttered, "*Ema!*" Which I know is the Japanese name for the god of bad luck.

Had I heard another plaint I should have probably stepped out to this gentleman who ignores me, his wife. But quite shortly to me floats the fumes of a cigar and I know my recreant husband is wooing the weed men think the panacea for masculine woes.

So we sit, only the big wind-sail between us, my husband apparently getting what comfort he can out

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of a very good Havana, and his wife growing very angry at him. I try to contemplate the affair philosophically. The more I think of the icy coldness of a man who will permit a declaration that he is to die in fifteen minutes after the ceremony to debar him from even saying: "How are you, my esteemed Princess?" and seeing how widow's weeds become me, before he performs his bond and passes out of my life, the more furious it makes me.

A few minutes after, the sound of Sendai's footsteps tells me he has departed. Oh, what a bitter blow to my pride! A bridegroom who will permit any promise whatever to keep him from my side! Had I loved him I should be in despair; as it is, I shall bring this loiterer in matrimony to my feet—to humiliate him. How to do it? Inspiration flies through me. Sendai is mathematically cold, but has the hauteur of his *Daimio* race. He will never permit the name of his august family to become the gossip of the ship. An admirer? That is what I want, instantly! My recreant bridegroom will hardly look with complacency upon a moonlight flirtation by his wife, the Princess Sendai, on this very deck. His pride will make him declare himself my husband. An admirer—an ardent admirer!

Colonel Ponsomby, sauntering the deck and looking

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for me, is the man for my purpose. Two minutes after I am hanging on his arm in a way that makes the British gallant think he has made what in American slang is called "a mash."

The moon is rising over the waves of the Yellow Sea. It will give light enough to Sendai to observe his bride looking into the stalwart English Colonel's eyes with a widow's coy glances.

Not that I permit the flirtation to go very far, though I make it appear to be much more desperate than it really is.

Hanging lackadaisically upon my gallant's arm, I keep the Colonel walking up and down the forward part of the deck, away from most of the cabin passengers, but in full view of any gentlemen smoking on the steerage. My voice is low and caressing; I look languishingly at Ponsomby till he strokes his blond moustache that has been grizzled by years of Eastern service and thinks his fifty-year-old beauty has played havoc with my adolescent heart. To the military beau I bashfully murmur: "I could never marry now aught but an army man of distinction."

His eyes begin to sparkle in the moonlight with rapture. "My deah young Princess," he whispers, "your words show your sense and make me forget

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everything but that you are by my side and that I am boyishly romantic about you. Never has——"

But Ponsomby's ardent expressions are now interrupted by the suave voice of my recreant bridegroom. Standing before us in full Japanese uniform, which he has apparently donned for his greeting to me, Sendai remarks nonchalantly: "Esteemed madame, I am sorry to interrupt your moonlight tête-à-tête. You will excuse my not presenting myself immediately to you upon my arrival on board. The truth is, I was so infamously dirty and unkempt after my Manchurian dodging of Cossacks that I was not presentable to—to my bride."

I give a gasp of apparently tremendous surprise and agitation, and falter: "Sendai, my husband, returned! Alive! Here! Escaped from the Russians!"

At my words the British Colonel staggers back and stammers: "Your husband? By Jove!" in astounded tones. Then, for Ponsomby has a great good will for the Japanese and the usual Anglo-Saxon admiration for heroism, he succeeds in remarking: "I'm very glad to see you alive, sir. Your escape must have been a very curious one. I have heard of your heroic action among the Russians, and with your permission will leave you to—to your wife." The last is a regretful sigh. I presume the moonlight is becoming to me;

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my eyes are sparkling with a peculiar yet audacious triumph as they gaze upon Sendai.

I have forced his hand. I have won—*what?*

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CHAPTER X.

"SHALL KIGURO'S SACRIFICE BE NAUGHT?"

Then the Colonel hurries away to the main salon to tell unbelieving ears that the dead is alive and my husband in some marvelous manner has escaped Russian execution, while Sendai and I stand confronting each other upon the deck, which is now quite deserted, though it is still early in the evening, for the night has grown somewhat colder.

My husband's attitude is so uncompromising I am almost sorry that I forced him to reveal himself. His black orbs glow with critical austerity from a gaunt face which exhibits in every line the terrific hardships he has encountered. He doesn't even take my hand. Then a flash suddenly comes into the darkness of his eyes and I can see them grow luminous in the moonlight. Is it because I look so well in black?

Despite this, he remarks, a caustic severity in his tone that frightens me: "You will pardon me presenting myself to you, honored lady. When I stepped on board this vessel I had no knowledge that you were

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one of its passengers. Otherwise, though I am under immediate orders for Tokyo, I should have in some way saved you the embarrassment of a journey on the same vessel. But being here and noting that, apparently convinced of my death, you have already assumed a widow's privilege of coquetry, I deemed it necessary for my honor and for yours to inform you that you have yet a living husband—though one who remembers his promise to you." The last of his speech is in a saddened tone.

"You—you think I will hold you to your statement that you would very shortly die after I gave you my hand in marriage?" I whisper, indignation struggling with misery in my voice.

"I believe that you have a right to demand that I keep my contract," he remarks, solemnly, "but that afterward! As it is now known that I, your husband, am on board this boat with you, it is my duty as well as my pleasure to shield you from the embarrassment which would come to you with it. For this purpose I assume sole authority over a lady bearing my name until I can say to her: 'Go thy way!' When next you hear of me I shall be but a memory."

A buzz from the cabins tells me that the escape of my husband from the Russians is known about the boat. Ponsomby's tongue has done quick duty in the

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main salon, from which a number of gentlemen are hurrying to the deck, headed by the skipper, to welcome an officer whose gallant feat has made him the talk of the Far East.

The Prince looks at me for a moment; then says: "Under the circumstances, you will admit I have no option, esteemed Princess. You will announce to your father"—there is command in his tone—"that I wish to greet him as——"

"As what?" I falter.

"As your husband!"

"Y-e-s," I stammer, meekly, and would turn away. But for the first time during this interview he takes my hand and draws me to him—I think to caress me—but he merely whispers in my ear a solemn warning: "Until I pass from your life, no glance at any other man but me." His eyes seem to me big as Bluebeard's.

"Of—of course," I shiver, more docilely than I had ever anwered in my life before. Then I plead: "Please wait a second, Sendai, till I have explained to Papa. Your resurrection will be a shock to him, for he thought he saw your body hanging on that Manchurian bridge."

"From that Manchurian bridge—by Diakoku, you

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mean—oh, I know whom you mean!—Kiguro, who gave his noble life for me. Yes, yes, tell your father!"

Sendai steps to the bulwark; his face is turned over the Yellow Sea towards Manchuria; his thoughts have placed him beside the dead body making atonement for him—to Russian execution. Tears, the first I have ever seen in Sendai's eyes, dim them as they gaze over the moonlit water. The softer emotion in him gives me hope he will be merciful to me. And yet I am not sorry his austere warning frightened me and made me tremble. That would indicate that he was the being intended for me by Nature and the Bible.

Half staggering to Papa's cabin, I give a warning rap and enter. He is seated, writing on some contracts or estimates, I suppose. To him I tell my wondrous story of Kiguro's enormous sacrifice and my husband's marvelous escape from Russian death.

As he listens, Dad shudders: "Nonsense! You've gone crazy thinking on the subject, unhappy girl!"

"Nonsense?" I answer; "Sendai is outside that door waiting on the deck there."

Evidence of this is now coming in to us. We hear some Japanese officers who had cabin passage cry: "*Banzai* Sendai!" We hear the skipper saying he is honored by having the Prince on board his ship.

The English contingent, headed by Ponsomby, are

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crying: "Bravo, Sendai!" and Sammy Debrow's voice is saying, generously: "You Japanese hero, your bride is in there waiting for you."

There is a rap upon the door.

I bow my head. Something comes into my heart that make my eyes swim.

"By the Eternal!" screams Dad, springing from his desk and knocking his business papers right and left. "Good God!—you here—*alive?*"

For Sendai, in as natty a Japanese uniform as ever graced dandy of the Guard, and looking as dashing, despite his privations, as any officer in the Mikado's service, stands before us.

As the lamplight permits him for the first time full view of his blushing widow, an eagerness springs into his dark eyes that gives my heart a terrible thumping, automobile action. My limbs scarce support me.

Noting this, the Prince places me most politely in a chair.

Without waiting for my husband to speak, my father breaks out upon him: "My God, Sendai, how could you put such desperate peril upon my daughter by visiting her at our bungalow by the railroad bridge you were going to mine!"

Here a sad voice makes my heart beat indignantly,

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as the Prince answers: "I had no idea of meeting you or your daughter there, honored Mr. Armstrong. I presumed you at Port Arthur. My objective was, of course, that Russian bridge, whose construction I had learned well from its drawings I saw when I visited you in Tokyo."

He didn't come to Manchuria because he must see my face! I am so chagrined I kick my feet about, as the cold-blooded creature continues, impressively: "Your unexpected and sudden arrival with your daughter appalled me, esteemed American. Then my great hope was that you would not discover me in your coolie gardener engaged by Yaling, who hates the Russians because they killed his father and all his brothers during Boxer time up in the Liao River Valley. When you took the railroad the next morning to go north, that was a relief to me. But, unfortunately, you left your daughter at your house, and she, to my dismay and horror, discovered my identity. I tried to keep her from any communication with me, but despite her own risk she came to me in the dead of night to warn me of the additional danger upon me from the Russian suspicion of Yaling. Then, at my request, to keep her from scandal, she married a dying man. She risked so much for my poor life, I

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thought she might endure being my wife for fifteen short minutes."

Good Heavens! Even Sendai thinks I love him. I am so incensed I wriggle nervously on my chair.

"Well, since you're not dead," says Father, quite cheerfully, "and are married to my daughter, I reckon the best thing you can do is to go into business with me. You're the corkingest engineer I ever saw. They are going to build three or four big cantilever bridges across the East River, and with your engineering ability I think we can get the contracts and make a raft of money."

"There is something better for a Japanese soldier than building bridges just at present," remarks Sendai, gravely. "I am about to apply for permission to leave the General Staff for active duty in the front.

"Why, there's no work for engineers in the front of battle!" I break in, for my husband's manner frightens me.

"Pardon me, honored lady," returns the Prince. "Now that modern war has been made scientific, the highest duty of an engineer is in the very front of battle. We have to assault fortified places. Who must make the reconnoisances, drawing the Russian fire to determine the calibre of the guns, and how best to silence their artillery—the engineers! Who must

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discover, if possible, and cut in the midst of engagement the wires leading to the Muscovite mines that will be placed to blow up our charging regiments?"

"My God, that's the point of greatest danger, Sendai!" I falter—for his sadly determined face frightens me, and I note that he no more calls me wife, but honored lady.

"The place of greatest danger is where I wish to be!" he answers, sententiously.

But Papa breaks in: "You've got to think of your wife now, young man, even if your country is at war."

"Perhaps this discussion had better go on entirely between your father and myself, honored Princess," remarks Sendai, looking at my perturbed face and trembling form. "You had best retire to your own cabin, esteemed lady. There I will consult with you quite shortly."

The coldness of his tone shocks me, but I rise falteringly without a word. The Prince ceremoniously escorts me to the door, and bowing to me whispers pointedly: "I shall have a few questions to ask you as husband to wife." Somehow I know he's going to be awfully strict with me.

As I turn from the cabin entrance Father chuckles: "Thunder! Already she obeys you better than she ever did me!" Then I hear Papa whisper:

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"I'm going to dower your bride nobly to support her rank, Prince—a couple of million dollars!" and I understand by dear old Dad's pleading tones that he is trying to induce Sendai to accord me more consideration than Oriental husband usually gives Eastern wife.

To this my bridegroom says: "My honored Mr. Armstrong, money is your daughter's slightest charm in my eyes."

Aha! That puts an idea in my head! "*Slightest* charm!" At least Sendai thinks I am beautiful.

I trip over the deck quickly to my cabin, tear off my widow's weeds, toss them across the stateroom, open my trunks and command San Shoo to make me bridelike!

Soon in dazzling, gleaming satin, white from petite slippers to soft lace neckgear, I sit, uneasily, awaiting coming husband.

A few minutes after, the Prince marches into my cabin. I arise flutteringly to meet him. At his gesture San Shoo leaves the big deck cabin, and I stand glancing at him bashfully. We had been alone together before; but then my husband had been bound and helpless—dying! Now he is free and my master!

To me he says in his formal Japanese way: "Honored Princess, esteemed lady," and bows to the deck.

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And I, imitating Japanese fashion, bend before him, and rubbing my hands upon my knees, imitate that peculiar hissing which indicates the reverent salute of wife to husband.

At this for a moment he smiles, and says: "You don't do it as well as when you were a geisha, child. You are too frightened—frightened of *me.*" Ah, the pathos in his precise, soft voice as he continues: "You hoped you were my *widow,* not my *wife!*"

"I—I did not know that you would escape," I falter.

"Yes, the black mourning of your robe told me you believed I had kept my contract to die after I married you," he answers, simply. "Yaling's words to me, that you directed him to tell me that I had not broken my parole to the Russian officers and could escape with honor, produced an audacious hope that you might wish a living huband; not a dead one. But upon that deck I saw a widow's coquetry; it told me you believed I had kept my bond. Do not despair, honored lady, my contract is only postponed for a little time. No woman shall say I broke my word to her, and, least of all, my wife. Don't scream!"—I had emitted a shivering plaint—"I shall not commit *seppuku* in the usual way, but I shall see you no more, and you will read of my death where I can do my country

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the greatest good by dying. There are better ways of committing *hari kiri* now for Japan than by the short-sword method. *Sayonara!*" He turns to leave the cabin.

These words from the mouths of some men I would believe bravado, but from Sendai's cool, clean-cut, aristocratic lips they mean his death. Falteringly, I shudder: "Shall that sacrifice of the noble Kiguro be in vain? No, no!"

For a moment a kind of rapture lights his face; then, misunderstanding me, he simply bows again, and says: "I thank you for permitting me to live. Allow me to ask a question and I shall leave you. Do you know who betrayed my presence by the bridge to the Russian officers? When I was seized I immediately suspected that Yaling, under bribery or torture, had betrayed me to my enemies, but since then, his active aid for my safety and his own flight from the enemies of Japan have convinced me of his innocence."

I look nervously at my husband. His cool, piercing eyes tell me that he half guesses. For the second time in my life I am frightened of this man. I, Hilda Armstrong—no, Hilda Sendai—commence to tremble before my judge-like husband. To him I stammer: "It was I, unwittingly—believe me, Sendai—who be-

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trayed you. My visit to give you warning was what brought death so close to you."

"By *Ema,* you told Schevitch!" he shudders, and his mien grows terrifying.

"No, no; not that! I would have died sooner than betray you. I took the risk of my own life to save you—you remember that—you must know that."

"Yes, but—but the Russian was at your country house and—*and made love to you!*" he mutters, feverishly, and his eyes glow with fiery misery.

Aha! At last I know the full meaning of Sendai's perturbed manner, of Sendai's questions. He is jealous—jealous of Schevitch! Despite his self-restraint I can see his lips twitch beneath his moustache.

I could clap my hands in triumph as I answer, proudly: "No, the Baron did not make love to me; I wouldn't permit it." Then tears come very near my eyes as I whimper: "No man—*not even my own husband*—has made love to me."

"By your husband you mean *me?*" Sendai's face, from that of judge, becomes that of an adorer.

"Of course, I do," I flutter. "Who ever married me before? Isn't this a bride's dress?"

Either the beauty of my costume or the latent insinuation of my manner seems to make my husband more of a Turk than a Japanese.

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"And no man will marry you again. You are my own!" he replies, in Oriental passion. "I shall escort you, honored spouse, to my father's, the Prince's, estates. There you will remain as Japanese Princess should, awaiting a *daimio* when he goes to battle."

But this suggestion of princely seclusion frightens me. I plead: "No, no; please not, my honored husband. Think what it will mean to me, who do not speak the language, alone in the retirement of a Japanese wife."

"Ah, yes, but what I saw upon the deck this night," dissents Sendai; "that clinging to the stalwart English Colonel's arm; those coy, alluring glances in his wooing face."

"Pish!" I answer, flippantly. "Ponsomby is fifty."

"Old snakes are deadly," replies the Prince, sententiously. Then he asks a short, sharp question: "Did you know I was living when you gave tête-à-tête to the English officer?"

Beneath his searching glance I dare not lie. "Yes!" I answer, almost defiantly.

"*Izanagi!*" Sendai's face says *hari kiri.*

"But it was to bring you to my side!" I cry, almost imploringly. "Do you suppose I would permit such insult as a voyage incognito on the same ship by my bridegroom for any reason on this earth except I told

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him, 'Get ye gone!' Have I uttered those words, my husband?" I am so angry at him that I forget maidenly pride and half sob: "You need have no fear of me, your wife—no fear of Russian barons or anything else but your own jealousy." I have thrown away all hauteur. My timid manner, my abashed face, my teary eyes, tell him he is monarch of all he surveys.

Gazing upon me, my husband commences to smile again, and after a minute's consideration, says: "No, I believe retirement would not suit you, my dashing Hilda." He seats himself as if he were at home, and his manner becomes American. "Perhaps when I go to the front, you had better live by yourself after I have presented you to my father and mother, the old Prince and Princess. Though the *Yashiki* of our family was given thirty years ago to the general government, I have a very pretty palace near the Kasuyima Street in Tokyo. There you can receive your foreign and American friends as a modern princess of Japan. How do you like that?"

"Oh, that will be very nice, Okashi," I whisper. Then I venture to place my hand confidingly but timidly on his shoulder and whisper: "You are going to treat me as if I were a modern American wife, eh?"

As I speak I reflect with horror that I shall never be kissed in my whole life. The Japanese never kiss.

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Sendai will never kiss me, and I know he will never permit any other gentleman to salute me by osculation. No to be kissed in my whole life! And here is a husband who, I believe, is beginning to adore me in his awful, formal Japanese way.

My grasp upon my husband's arm has become a clinging one. He is seated; I sink on my knees before him and hide my head in his lap. My mental telegraphy appears to reach his acute senses; a smile ripples his features, he half laughs: "By the bye, if I permit you to live as a modern American wife, perhaps my exquisite bride would like me to treat her as if I were an ordinary American husband?"

My face glows like a lotus flower. I glance up archly at him, and murmur: "Yes, Sendai."

Oh, mercy! His arm glides round my slender waist; his athletic embrace nearly makes me squeal. He draws my blushing face to him and kisses me as if his very soul were on his lips.

Then the wretch laughs: "How is that for high, little woman?"

Where did the villain learn to kiss so potently? It must have been when he was a Harvard freshman studying American customs; the Japanese are such a thorough race.

Oh, Heaven, how happy I am! Sendai is whisper-

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ing to me: "I knew you loved me when you risked your life to try and save me" Even my husband thinks I love him!

"Now," he observes, "a little tour of the salon together, just to prove you are no widow."

Jack Bristow says I'm spoons on Sendai, as I come out of the cabin hanging on the Prince's arm, "'Melican fashion."

About this time Dad is going about the ship's deck and talking to the skipper of "my son-in-law, Prince Sendai, the greatest engineer officer I've ever seen, and I've tackled all of 'em." At first opportunity he whispers to Sendai: "Can't you give me a day or two in Tokyo, Prince, from your military duty, just to go over the plans of the new East River bridge that have been forwarded to me from America?"

And the Prince says: "No, all the time I have to spare, esteemed Mr. Armstrong, shall be given to my wife before I go to the front."

Before he goes to the front! Oh, that's what makes my bride's heart so heavy! I know the Russians will kill him. They missed him once, but now he'll no more have his devoted *Samurai* to give his life for him.

But Sendai's ardor makes me forget future fears in

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present love. Never was bride so happy all this honeymoon voyage.

We reach Tokyo, and oh, the to-do that the Japanese capital makes over my heroic husband. The Mikado accords him a private audience, and Pinkie Caldwell at last believes that Sendai loves me!

Soon in the beautiful cemetery, by the grave of the forty-seven Ronins, who died for their *Daimio* two hundred years ago, the Prince erects a Shinto shrine to the actor of the Kabukiza Theatre, who gave his life, like they, for his feudal chief. Japanese throngs come to worship it. They know the touching story, and though no more the crowds applaud Kiguro on the flowery paths of the Kabukiza Theatre, they have a grand performance in his memory and for his widow's benefit. But that is not necessary. The Thousand Joys can have all the Prince and I possess to make her life a happy one. The heroic spirit of her husband she can only meet beyond the shades.

Then my husband leaves me to fight the Russians; and the days of awful waiting come. The social world, Japanese and foreign, is at my feet, but I think no more of it; I only think of his danger.

Then we hear the news of the carrying of Kin-chow and that awful Nanshan Hill, bristling with cannon and mined at its base. But who found the wires to

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the Russian mines and in the front of that dread assault cut them and saved the charging Japanese regiments from annihilation? My husband was one of that band of heroic engineers.

Then something strikes my heart!

I scream as I hear them say I may be a real widow.

Then a wire comes that tells me he perhaps will live, and I go down by steamboat to Chemulpo. There I find him in the hospital and nurse him, and the surgeons say my devotion saved my darling boy's life.

We have returned to Tokyo.

Now he can walk with a cane. But, thank God, he won't be able to fight again for a year or two! By that time the war will probably be over.

The Mikado has appointed him military attaché of the Japanese Embassy to the Court of St. James—the English Court! Look out for your prestige, Mesdames Marlborough and Roxburghe. What are your puny titles, scarce two hundred years old, to that of a *daimio* prince, whose house for two thousand years has record in the history of Japan?

The Japs are the coming race, I can tell you! Way for the Princess Sendai! *Banzai,* Princess Sendai!

Jingo, if my modest husband saw what I am writing!

I hear his halting step upon the lacquered palace

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floor; I run out, put my arm beneath his wounded shoulder and make myself his crutch.

As I support him he kisses me as fervidly as if he were a West Point man. My husband, the dandiest officer in one of the bravest armies in the world, the fellow who doesn't fear—even his own wife!

Finis.

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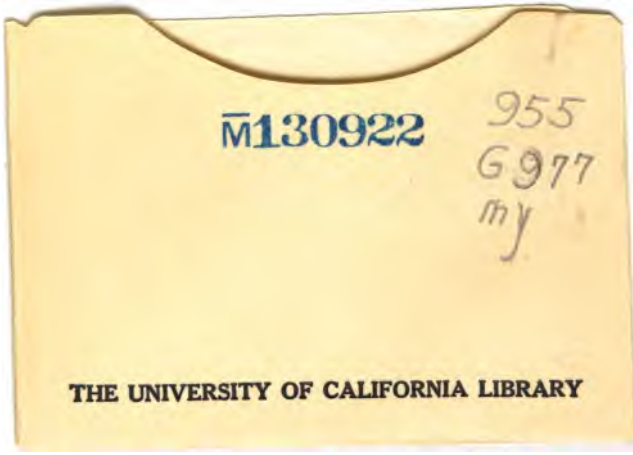
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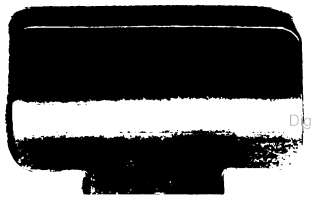

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